Haiti SV3

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● 796

[For information on small scale family ceremonies, see category 78.]

512 neighbors paying friendly visits and of playing children gradually
[264] become stilled. It is the time for the evening meal. By
nine o'clock at the latest all is quiet and Mirebalais, man and
beast, is asleep.

● 796 The *vodun* drums are heard only on Saturday nights, and
527 then the dance must be sufficiently close to the town, and the
wind in the right direction, for the sound to be audible.
[556] Permits for these dances must be obtained, and are regularly
given by the police officials — or were in 1934 — and word is
passed on that on a given Saturday certain households will
give *vodun* dances. If the dances are held in the foothills to
the west, the Tombe River must be forded, and the existence
of such a barrier between the village and the site of the dance
makes this a favorite region in which to hold them, even
though they may have official sanction. During the rainy season
[484] attendance at dances on the opposite bank of the Artibonite
[501] River depends on the height of the stream, for when
it is in flood not even the dugout canoes of the Haitians can
cross it, while the ferry which Moreau de St. Mery speaks of
as having been established in 1749 does not even exist in local
tradition.[14] Yet no dance lacks participants or spectators, for
these occasions furnish the principal opportunity for recreation
even as they fill their proper religious function. Early in
[798] the week discussions can be heard of the dances to be held,
and though the official frown of the Catholic priest is always
to be reckoned with, the importance of these dances, and the
numbers who attend them, do not seem markedly lessened by
[554] this fact. Those whose social position in the community makes
them more sensitive to such criticism merely take the precaution
to slip quietly out of town after dark.

796 When occasions of local or national significance and church
holidays are celebrated, the town is full of country folk and
[788] visitors from the cities. Christmas and New Year's, Mardi
Gras and Easter are all periods for such celebrations, while the
first Sunday of every month witnesses a religious procession

about the square that precedes the principal mass of the day. 796 788
These processions, however, are as a mere rehearsal for the great procession held during the festival of St. Louis, the patron saint of the town. At that time the statue of the saint, carried by the faithful — among whom can be seen more than one perspiring *vodun* priest and *bocor* — is taken triumphantly through the streets to insure a good year. The nearness of the valley to the village of Ville Bonheur makes the great religious festival of Saut d'Eau, where the "miracle of the Virgin" is believed to have occurred, almost a local matter. 796 [184] And though Saut d'Eau lies well over the mountains, July 15 finds most of the population of Mirebalais away from home celebrating the miraculous revelation with folk from other parts of Haiti. May Day is celebrated as the "Fête de l'Agriculture," 527 and two years ago a new day of rejoicing was added to the calendar of festivals. This is known as the "Festival of the Second Independence," the anniversary of the departure of the American Marines from Haiti, and is marked by the "illumination" of all houses the night before and a solemn discourse from the mayor after a Te Deum has been sung in the church.

Thus life in the valley of Mirebalais continues the course 175 [178] it has followed for the past two hundred years. Though its history, as we can reconstruct it, has been marked by turbulent periods, these have been far from the rule. It is true that because of its position it has always been a point to be defended, and often, both before and after the time of Haitian independence, it has been a region where decisive encounters with those who controlled the Spanish portion of the island have taken place. Not for many years, however, until the Caco 175 648 uprising against the American Marines, did Mirebalais experience military activities on any considerable scale. After the death of Charlemagne Perrault, when his successor selected the valley as a strategic point to be defended, a large force of Marines was encamped near the confluence of the

512 grain in her mortar or working in her garden near by. On
443 market days she takes the produce of the family's fields to the
438 town to sell. If she has young children, she cares for them
855 while she does her other work, but when they are old enough,
857 they help her about the house if they are girls, or, if boys, go
with their father to the garden. From time to time, when
356 house repairs are needed or there are implements to be
241 mended, the man spends a day at home getting these odd
jobs done; otherwise only serious illness in the family keeps
him from his fields.

512 The times for meals have not varied since the days when
264 Moreau de St. Mery described the eating-habits of the slaves.[2]
In addition to the mid-morning repast, the only other meal
is that eaten after the man returns from his field, this being
562 the largest of the day. A wife does not sit down with her
593 husband, but usually eats earlier with her small children and
holds herself ready to serve him upon his return, when, if he
is alone, she remains to tell him the day's gossip. Visitors are
574 often present, for peasant etiquette demands that all comers
576 be offered food, and, as one Haitian expressed it, "The peasant
would kill you for the insult if you did not share your
meal with him." Bedtime, as might be expected, is early.

512 On Sundays and on the days of festivals this routine is interrupted,
527 when, if the occasion is of sufficient importance
796 and the habitation is not too far from town, the peasant and
his family attend mass. On Saturday nights there is usually a
vodun dance, when the early hour for retirement is forgotten
and all-night festivities precede Sunday's rest. On such days
264 the principal meal is eaten at three or four o'clock in the
afternoon, and all the adults share it together, while at one
side the children are fed from the dishes of their parents in
response to the insistent repetition of the demand "*Ba'm pa'm* — give me my portion." *

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* This is an example of the elision characteristic of Haitian Créole, it being abbreviated from *Ba moin part moin* or, in French, *Donnez-moi ma part.*

585 for the victims of smallpox. If family traditions also tell of
769 those shot, not in war, but as prisoners, perhaps, a candle is
782 lighted for them outside the cemetery wall. Though the
couple may perform this ceremony together, each makes this
request of the dead of his or her own family as the candles are
lighted. This call on the dead is repeated several days after
the marriage or later, when candles are again lighted.

591 The sole exception to the performance of these rites before
583 the new household is begun occurs in those cases of *plaçage*
585 where a girl continues to live at her own home. This is rare,
769 however, for the house of a man is usually built near that of his
father, and he takes his wife there. But if special circumstances
dictate otherwise, the ceremony of notifying and pacifying
the family deities may be deferred, though a man must eventually
present every woman with whom he lives to his family
gods and in turn must be presented to the gods of the woman's
family. In similar fashion the dead of both families must be
adequately notified.

585 Marriages rarely take place in the months of November
[777] and December, the former being disliked because it is "the
month of the dead," during which All Saints' Day occurs, and
● [796] the latter because it ends the year. Except for the Church
[583] wedding and less elaborate festivities to celebrate the event,
the rites which mark a *plaçage* mating do not greatly differ
from those which mark a legal marriage, which may be described
[777] in outline. The favorite day for Church marriages is
Saturday, "the day of the Virgin," and the time for the ceremony
is always early morning, before the heat of the day has
set in. If the home of the girl is some distance from Mirebalais,
the party come to town the preceding day, the girl spending
the night with some friend. Otherwise the bridegroom, accompanied
by his relatives and friends, goes to the house of
the girl early Saturday morning. Before the couple leave the
[782] home of her parents, water must be thrown on the ground in
[788] front of them, and also sprinkled by them before the en-

787 the one possessed, possessions of this kind mean either that the
776 *loa* needs baptism; or that, being baptized, its devotee has been negligent in serving the god.

● 796 No actual rite of baptism of a *loa* — or, as it is also termed,
776 of *lavé tête,* "washing the head" — was witnessed, but the
794 account of the ceremony given here, obtained independently from several persons, represents an adequate exposition of the rite as performed in Mirebalais. A room is prepared where the person whose *loa* is to be baptized must remain for three days. The mat or bed on which the neophyte rests is covered with fresh sheets and pillow-cases, and three changes of clothing are made ready, one of which must be entirely new for the last day of the ceremony. These are in the color of the god
[822] being "baptized"; that is, if the *loa* were revealed to be such a one as Damballa, Aida Wedo, or Gran' Erzilie, everything would be white, but if it were Gran' Siligbo, the colors would be blue and white; if Ogun, everything would be red; if Ossange, blue; where the god is one of the Pétro suite, such as 'Ti Kita or Bosu, everything would be black.*

During the three days' "retreat" the one whose *loa* is being consecrated lies alone. All day long the men and women of the family sit in the next room or outside the house, singing and praying, though at night they sleep, since "this is not a wake."
[533] They not only sing the songs sacred to the *loa* being baptized, but also the canticles of the Virgin, while prayers of the Church are recited under the leadership of the *prêt' savanne,* the "bush-priest" whose ability to read the prayers makes him an essential figure in all *vodun* rites. They may from time to time have "a little procession" about the room where the novitiate lies, when small banners in the color of the god are
[782] carried. Soft drinks and a *mangé sec* — a "dry" offering — are given the god, and white tapers and an oil lamp are

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* A detailed listing of the names, attributes, and powers of the more widely worshipped *loa,* the colors, days, and trees or other places sacred to them, and the "squads" into which they are conceived to be formed, will be found in an appendix at the end of this book.

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lighted. Chicken and rice may also be cooked for any god except Gede, while chocolate and rice with milk are favored, since it is said " the *loa* love desserts " — a commentary on the very immediate and human character of these spirits. 776 776 [782]

The actual baptism, or " washing of the head," is performed on the third day of the ceremony by a *vodun* priest or priestess who is a member of the family, though any member who has important *loa* and the necessary *connaissance* may officiate if the membership of the family includes no priest. [793] [596] As at any baptism, there must be a godfather and godmother, and preference is given those who are the parents of twins or are themselves twins. [608] The officiant must be possessed at the time, since, it is said, " one *loa* baptizes another." [787] Leaves of the basilique tree are steeped in perfumed cold water, and the hands of the one who baptizes are first immersed in the liquid; then, while songs of the *loa* and canticles of the Virgin are sung, he washes the head of the person to be baptized. [824] [533] Possession occurs immediately, and the new devotee lies back, half conscious, while all others kneel, seeking word from the *loa* to learn if it is satisfied. [787] If an affirmative answer is given, all retire, the person possessed remaining in the room to sleep through the night. A " ball," but not a *vodun* dance, may celebrate the event either the next day or later, but this is not obligatory, and most often those present, after eating, quietly disperse. [529] The following day the one who has been baptized goes to the family place of worship and greets those who have helped him. Only one further rite is necessary, and this solely when the *loa bossal* is revealed to be a hostile god. Then the *loa*, after having been baptized, is " restrained " by being placed in a jar and buried, so it cannot later emerge and trouble the family of the one to whom it has come.[13]

The ceremony of baptism, in Mirebalais, is in no sense a first step into any *vodun* hierarchy, for, as will be seen, no such hierarchy exists in this valley. One important priest there derives his power from *loa* that have never been bap- [793]

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794 tized at all, but merely respond to an innate ability to control
776 them. To have a baptized *loa*, then, merely means that the
[793] worship of the *loa* is thereafter carried on in regular form. The worshipper learns how to *marré*, or "tie," [14] his spirit, so as to enjoy the social aspects of a *vodun* dance without fear
[782] that his *loa* will come unbidden. He gives it small offerings from time to time, and if it becomes insistent, or if his family is being troubled by its gods, he takes full part in the rituals that are staged.[15]

787 In native idiom, a person when possessed is "mounted"
776 by his god, and thereafter becomes his *ch'wal*, or "horse." A
794 devotee may come under the influence of a number of spirits during a single ceremony or dance, one *loa* succeeding another. The first deity that ever came to a person, however, for him constitutes the chief of his gods — his *mait' tête* — and the leader of any deities which may subsequently possess him.
[764] It is this *loa* alone that is "baptized," and this one alone "taken from his head" at his death; and, as far as he is concerned, all his other gods are under the control of this *mait' tête*, so that any agreement which he may enter into with this principal spirit must be respected by all the others.

Fundamentally, to be possessed by a *loa* means that an individual's spirit is literally dispossessed by that of the god. Personalities undergo radical change in accordance with the nature of the deity,[16] while even the sex of the one possessed is disregarded if it differs from that of the god, so that, for example, a woman "mounted" by Ogun is always addressed as Papa Ogun.[17] One wears the colors of the god and the ornaments he likes, eating and drinking those things he prefers, and otherwise manifesting his peculiar characteristics — rolling on the earth, if possessed by Damballa or chattering incessantly if by Gede.[18]

787 Not everyone, by any means, is subject to states of posses-
781 sion. If the existence of individual differences in the capacity
794 for religious expression be recognized, it becomes apparent

346 778 776 774 778 the rooms is consecrated to the *loa,* the other to the spirits of twins and the family dead. If the house is a large one with three rooms, the third will be for the Congo *loa.* It was also said that occasionally such places of worship reserve one room for the Rada deities, a second for the Pétro *loa,* and the third for the Congo gods, the dead and twins being worshipped elsewhere. For the Ibo gods, however, it is agreed in Mirebalais that there is never a separate room. But whether the gods are worshipped in a single-room thatched shelter or a more impressive "temple" with a metal roof, none of the major categories of supernatural powers are neglected.

776 78 ● 796 774 In the main, large ceremonies are concerned with the task of restraining, or less often of pacifying, deities that have been molesting a family, and of making content those who have been demonstrating their goodwill toward the group. Such rites must be sharply differentiated from the ordinary *vodun* dance which, coming after the family ritual, forms but a part of this complex, and serves to express joy at the dangers averted and gratitude for the good that the friendly *loa* are to bring. At the ceremony drums may or may not be employed; at *vodun* dances they are indispensable. Possession is induced at the ceremony by the *hungan's* invocations; at the dance by the rhythm of the drums. The ceremony is attended only by members of the family and those who are specially invited; invitations to the *vodun* dance are broadcast over the countryside, and all take part in the social phases of the evening. For the ceremony, sacrifices not alone of cereals and drinks but also of the blood of animals are provided; at the *vodun* dance only minor offerings are given. And while both types of ritual are a part of a single functioning religious system, it is at the first where the most important end is achieved, that of obtaining protection from hostile gods and gaining the favor of those who are friendly.

78 79 The pattern of the ceremony — called a *service loa* — is sufficiently definite to allow a generalized version to be given,

78 *loa* troubling the family, or, if it is the second, those which
79 have helped them, to tell whether or not they are willing to re-
776 ceive the sacrificial animals. The omen which indicates their acceptability to the gods is their nibbling at leaves or pecking at grains of corn and other cereals offered them, after which the gods themselves come, possessing their servitors. At midnight or later, as the violence of the possession recedes, the sac-
[184] rifices are offered. In Mirebalais, at least, the hysteria said to mark the moment " when the blood flows " is not present. The actual killing of the animals, witnessed in numerous instances, is one of the more routine aspects of the ritual.[4]

After the animals have been killed, a long period of quiet ensues while the work of dressing and cooking them takes place, the ceremony beginning anew when this is done. If evil deities are to be banished or "restrained," they are called once more, and the priest may have to battle with those possessed by them, for these gods have no desire to be driven away, or incarcerated where they cannot escape. Most of the food given such gods is placed in large pots and buried in the earth with them, but, with characteristic human perversity, if the sacrifices have been for good *loa,* these are only allowed to have small portions. The ceremony closes with the coming of day.[5]

78 This pattern varies in details, and to the Haitian these dif-
79 ferences are important. This is shown by the response of a per-
794 son in whose company two similar rites were observed, to the
776 question whether the second would resemble the first. The an-
184 swer was decisive. " No, the ceremony will not be the same. In
the first one the most important spirit lived in a mango tree; in the second, it is in a bamboo." The Pétro gods receive black or gray-colored animal offerings, the Rada deities white, red,
78 and vari-colored ones. Only Bosu Trois Cornes, Pelicon, and
796 Pelib are given bullocks, the first because he, like this animal,
794 is horned; the second because he is even more dangerous than
776 Bosu; and Pelib because as a water-god he will otherwise take

cattle and all other animals when the river floods. Rituals in- 78 796
volving these larger sacrifices, however, are held only on the 794
rarest of occasions, and are thus much less common than 776
the ceremony which, typical of those witnessed, may now be described.

This *service* was held in a habitation southwest of Mire- 78
balais, across the Tombe River in the foothills of the moun- 79
tains. It was said to be the first ceremony of its kind given by 753
this family, and would not have to be repeated for a genera- 776
tion or more. The immediate cause was the occurrence of numerous illnesses and deaths. When members independently consulted their *hungans* to discover the reason for these misfortunes, they were informed that the family *loa* demanded such a rite. Finally one priest, more powerful than the others, became possessed and described in great detail the type of ceremony that was desired: of how many days' duration, the number and kind of sacrifices, what gods were to be called, which troublesome ones must be " sent away " or " restrained," and those of the friendly *loa* who were to be fed.

The entire ritual was conducted out of doors, and at about 78
half past four in the afternoon of Thursday, 5 July, 1934, when 79
first seen, the *action de grâce* had already begun. It was being 776
chanted by the *prêt' savanne,* a bespectacled, middle-aged 778
man, who read from an old prayerbook, while the *hungan* sat quietly by. The officiant was standing in a cleared space with his back toward a grove of trees, facing the " altar." Opposite was a grassy slope, which was separated from this grove by a brook where the Maît' Source lives who watches over the habitation of the family. A white banner hung high in one of the trees a little behind the altar.

This altar, called the *trône,* was a table covered with a white cloth, spread over a frame to form a canopy sheltering its sides and back. A black cloth was beneath the white covering. Under the table a wooden bowl — a *gamelle* — contained water in which sacred leaves had been steeped; near it was a

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ABOVE, *The possessed woman offering a candle and pouring sanctified water before the altar.*

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BELOW, *The* vodun *priest exhorting the possessed woman.*

[facing P.161]

uals were being performed. If they failed to wave their banners 78
vigorously or often enough, the one in charge chided 79
them for their lack of zeal, whereupon their movements would become a kind of dance. During the *adoration* each member of the family was called upon to give coins or candles, the first for the *prêt' savanne,* though this was not his entire fee.

With the benediction, the *action de grâce* came to an end, 78
and the solemn, tired voice of the *prêt' savanne* was heard in- 79
toning a hymn, which, in the usual fashion, was repeated by 533
the assembled group until, without interlude, without even a pause, the interpolations of the chorus gradually changed, so that the rhythm became African, and, with the transition, the *vodun* priest took over the leadership. The *hungan* began by repeating several times the phrase which throughout the entire ceremony was to punctuate all its climaxes, "*Grâce [et] mise'corde,*" and the family murmured it in response. He then 78
ordered each member of the family to address himself to the 79
loa, telling what troubles had befallen him and what favors he 776
desired. An assistant now took six candles from the *trône.* Proceeding in a counter-clockwise direction, he described a large circle about that part of the meadow where the ceremony was to take place, fixing a candle in the ground at intervals. Four of these were for the four corners of the earth, one was for Mait' 'Bitation — the deity termed Master of the Habitation — and one for the Mait' Source — the Master of the Stream. When the members of the family, each holding a lighted candle, had formed in a line, they were bidden to place these candles in the earth within the area described by the six already there, and as they scattered over the sacred ground, little flickering flames dotted the hillside and the grassy meadow behind the *trône* in the deepening dusk.

Then all returned to the altar, and the *hungan,* taking the 78
first of three plates made ready for him, began to describe 793 796
verver. One plate held white cornmeal flour, one was filled 532
with gray ashes, called Guinea flour, and the third contained

78 a black powder of ground, roasted coffee beans. Starting at the
793 tree near the "first" table for Bosu, he traced a white line
296 that, passing the second table and the trees for Simbi, con-
532 tinued to the *trône,* to which subsidiary motifs were then
added in gray and black, making of the designs an intricate
geometric composition.

78 With bell in hand and a small whistle in his mouth, both of
79 which later were entrusted to his assistants, the *hungan* went
about, blowing the whistle at intervals to call the *loa*. Singing,
[533] he directed that a wooden boat-shaped basin containing water
be placed in front and a little to the left of the *trône* for washing the feet of the sacrificial animals. Though all the family were present, they were again ritually summoned in song to come with the sacrifices and were ordered to stand near by with lighted candles while the animals were bathed. As they gathered, the *hungan* became possessed by Simbi, who took it upon himself to set the fee for conducting this ceremony at 117.10 gourdes. When he announced this sum, loud pleas of poverty were heard from the family, while speaking through the priest, the god bargained with them until the sum of 110 gourdes was finally agreed upon.

[533] The *hungan* now sang a long invocation, inviting the gods
of all those places where Africans live to come. First the feet of
the fowl were washed, then those of the pigs, and finally of the
goat. Each fowl was passed over the body and head of every
[822] member of the family as it was presented with the requisite
song to the proper *loa* — the red and black cock for Legba, the black fowl for Gede, the red one for Ogun, the white for Damballa, and the fowl with ruffled plumage for Congo Zandor. Then each was placed on the ground in front of three small piles of food taken from the *trône*. They were watched with anxiety by all present, for the pecking at the food is a signal that the god accepts the animal given him. The small pigs for 'Ti Kita Demembré, and the boar for Bosu, were offered the same food as the fowls; the goat for Erzilie Gé Rouge was pre-

CHAPTER X

VODUN WORSHIP: THE DANCE

THE *vodun* dance, the most public aspect of Haitian peasant 796●
ritual, has been more frequently observed and reported on
than any other rites of the cult. The worship of the *loa* by an [178]
individual, the baptism of his *loa,* and the minor periodic sac-
rifices he makes to it that it may protect him are entirely pri-
vate in nature, while presence at the *service* for the *loa* is essen-
tially restricted to members of the family. The *vodun* dance, [203]
however, is viewed quite differently, for news of it is widely
spread by word of mouth, so that, in contrast to the private
character of all other rituals, *vodun* dances are important so-
cial occasions, and their success is measured by the numbers
in attendance and the enthusiasm of the participants which
makes a dance *chaud'* — " hot "!

The *vodun* dance may be said to function in several ways. 796
Above all, it is an integral part of the worship of the *loa,* and 787
as such is marked by repeated possessions which indicate the
presence of the gods. Yet it also offers an important opportunity for recreation, as is indicated by the fact that in Mirebalais the term *bamboche,* which means a dance at which one merely enjoys oneself, is often applied to it. By no means do all who go to a dance become possessed, for of one hundred to one hundred and fifty persons present, no more than twenty or twenty-five will come under the power of their gods. The old

The old
● 796 535 men and women exchange gossip and sit about, joining in the
songs or merely observing the proceedings; while the young
people form part of the singing, dancing circle that revolves
almost without pause about the central post of the *tonnelle,*
the shelter where the festivities are held.

796 To speak of discipline in connection with these dances is to
evoke new and astonishing images for readers familiar with
the more popular literature on Haiti. It is admittedly true that
as one first witnesses a *vodun* dance, one's reaction is that this
is a performance governed solely by the dictates of individual
[416] possession. These ceremonies are usually held at night, deep in
[291] the bush, lighted only by a small, smoking oil lamp and by the
[411] candles fastened to the pegs of the drums, while the partici-
pants dress in anything but their best clothing, and in their
belts the men carry the machetes always worn by the Haitian
[533] peasant. Add to this the effect of the unceasing rhythms of the
drumming, the blanket of sound from the unison singing of
the participants, the violence of the possessions, and it is not
strange that the untrained observer tends to assess what he
sees in almost any terms but those of the underlying discipline
that defines all activity in the worship of the gods. A release of
[154] psychic tension is undoubtedly afforded those who become
possessed, and this is also experienced to a lesser degree by all
796 those in attendance. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized, de-
786 spite so much that has been written to the contrary, that this
form of worship of the *loa* is neither unrestrained hysteria nor
drunken orgiastic satisfaction of the sex drive. The behavior
of the participants, in terms of the accepted patterns of Euro-
pean and American religious decorum, often seems uncouth,
vigorous, violent, and even dangerous, when it is merely the
expression of a different tradition. And as for the orgiastic as-
pects of these rites, Haitians have ample opportunity to sat-
isfy their sexual impulses elsewhere, without making this a
basic and constant element in the worship of their gods.

796 *Vodun* dances, in Mirebalais as elsewhere, take place on

Saturday nights. This is not because of the especially sacred 796
character of the day, but rather because the Haitian government, [656]
in order to assure a continuous working week, refuses
permits for other days. The occasions for the dances are varied,
as is evident from those given during the course of this fieldwork.
One of these was that of a *hungan* as a compliment to
visitors " who knew Dahomey " and was conducted as a serious
rite in the worship of the *loa*. Two dances marked the end of
services for family gods, and were variously interpreted as
tributes to the family dead and the twins, who must not be
neglected in any religious observance, and as celebrations
offered in praise of the gods who were to protect the families,
giving the dances, to mark the " restraining " of the evil spirits
responsible for their troubles. Two other dances celebrated
the " baptism " and initial use of new sets of drums. As has 796
been pointed out, there are also non-religious occasions on 527
which *vodun* dances are given. On days of secular celebrations,
such as the anniversary of the declaration of Haitian independence,
or the withdrawal of the Marines, the *vodun* dancing is
purely social, though the ritual drums are used, the sacred
songs are sung, and the steps of the dances are those seen at any
Saturday-night gathering. Added to the fact that no possessions [787]
or other manifestations of serious worship of the *loa* occur,
the " secular " *vodun* dances differ from the others in that
they are held away from any family shrine, taking place within
towns or cities, something never permitted in their non-social,
religious counterparts.

The *vodun* dance—and in the remainder of this chapter 796
only the dance which has significance in the worship of the *loa* 346
will be considered—is patterned like all other ceremonies of
the cult.[1] It is held at a family habitation, under an open brush
shelter known as a *tonnelle*, constructed for the occasion next
to the family *maison de servitude*. If the habitation at which [787]
the dance is given is not the one where this house of worship
is found, the shelter is built near a hut so that those possessed
will have a place to retire.

796 346 will have a place to retire. The *tonnelle,* which is merely a flat brush roof supported by a number of upright posts, must be built strongly enough to withstand the assaults of those possessed, who not only lean heavily on the supports, but sometimes climb through the brush roof to lie for a time on the cross-beams which form the base for this flimsy covering. Its ostensible aim is to protect the participants from what is known as the *neige,* or "snow," as the heavy dew is called, but, as might be expected, the structure has a ceremonial as well as a utilitarian purpose. Of particular importance is the central post, called the *porto cabesse,* or the *porto mita,* because the gods are believed to wait there until their drum rhythms sound, when they use this to descend into the *tonnelle.* The fire which burns during the whole period of the dance near the entrance to the habitation is also characteristic and indispensable. It is for Legba, who, as guardian of the entranceway must first be worshipped, in order that he may permit the other deities to come.

796 The dances may begin shortly after sundown, but are not fully under way until two or three hours later, and last all night. In no case was a dance witnessed which began while there was daylight, though during the dry months, January and February, when there is no work to be done in the fields, dances open at a somewhat earlier hour. The rectangular dancing-space under the *tonnelle* is lined with spectators, who are seated on such chairs and boxes as the family giving the dance can provide or such others as have been brought by their owners, though, in the main, people stand. The vigor of the dance varies as the night progresses. It is usually slow in starting, people drifting in later as they finish their evening meal, while the best drummers are rarely present at the outset. [793] Unless the dance follows an earlier ceremony, such as the baptism of drums, or a *humfort,* the *hungan* in charge also does not appear until a late hour and even when there has been an earlier rite, such a personage may well go to his home to rest before returning for the night's effort.

before returning for the night's effort. By midnight the dance 796 is in full swing. Though individuals here and there may absent themselves for a time, the attendance remains relatively constant, until as the crowing of cocks marks the approaching dawn, the number of dancers begins to dwindle rapidly, and with full daylight few remain other than members of the family. Only rarely does a *vodun* dance last well into the morning; what one sees after sunrise are the poorer drummers beating their mediocre rhythms for the young people who continue a desultory circling about the central pole. This does not mean that the *vodun* deities shun the daylight. It is merely because the participants must hurry away to get into their Sunday clothes for early mass in the village church.

The obligations of the family giving a dance are clearly established by tradition. Most important is the *tonnelle,* which they must build, and the drums and their accessory gong and rattles, which they must furnish. The drummers are not paid, but are given much attention when the refreshments that must be provided are distributed. These usually take the form of *clairin,* though coffee and bread may also be offered the guests early in the morning. The *clairin,* or raw rum, is passed [273] from time to time, but not in sufficient quantity to cause inebriation. Those who supplement this with a generous supply of their own, and show the effect of it, are regarded with anything but approval.[9] Other accessories for the dance which must be at hand are the banners used to salute the deities, and the candles and water needed to bring those possessed out of the more violent stages of their seizures. If anything else is [265] required or the guests desire further refreshments, these may [843] always be bought from the women who set up their little stands at every dance.

Drums, iron, and rattles are indispensable for a *vodun* 796 dance. The drums, of the characteristic hollow-log African 534 type, tuned with pegs inserted in the sides and reinforced with twine wound about the stretched heads of cow-hide or goat-

796 534 533 [778] skin, are played in batteries of three, the largest being called *manman*,[3] the middle the *seconde*, and the smallest the *bula*.[4] To be used in dances, the drums, like the *loa* of the worshippers, must be "baptized," as will be seen when an account of their making and consecration is given in a later chapter. The iron, or *ogan*, usually consists of the blade of a hoe struck by a large spike, and the rattle, *açon*, in the form most often encountered, is a rounded calabash, containing seeds or pebbles. The iron and the rattles set the basic, steady beat about which the complex drum rhythms play. The smallest drum first takes the time after the iron and the rattles have begun, the notes being played with an accessory figure by means of two thin sticks. The medium-sized drum is next heard, while the *manman*, ritually the most important of the three, comes in last. The *seconde* also has two sticks, one short, thick, and straight, the other a small bow, which gives an added resilience to the notes of the drums' subsidiary rhythms. In playing the great drum, the single crooked stick, called a *baguette*, is held in the right hand, while the left strikes the drumhead with heel or fingers according to the quality of tone desired. The drumstick itself is wielded either against the skin head or against its wooden side, thus permitting a further variation in tone. 796 776 533 When "salutes" to the gods are called for by the drums, it is the voice of the *manman* that signals the sweeping circular movements of the dancers, dictating with its beat the dips and semi-prostrations of this figure in the ritual dancing, called *asagwe*. The drum rhythms are always distinctive for each type of *loa*, and every devotee knows the rhythms which call his god.

796 534 [787] The drums and iron are the focus of all activity of the dance, especially since those who are possessed dance facing the drums, in whose beat is heard the voice of the gods. Hence the spectators cluster most closely about them, for anything of significance which happens must happen here. The players of the rattles — it is but rarely that more than one rattle is not

employed — do not remain with the drummers. These instru- 796
ments are ordinarily in the hands of *hunsi*, who join the 534
massed ring of dancers that constantly circles about the center [794]
pole. These dancers are not under possession, but are merely
enjoying the evening or participating in the social aspect of
the dance preparatory to becoming possessed. The rattle is 796
held high above the heads of the dancers, and its sharp, steady 533
notes are produced by quick, short, measured movements of
the wrist. The end of a song, which sometimes does not come
until fifteen or twenty minutes after its initial statement, is
usually marked by a continuous shaking of a rattle, a process
which effectually breaks the rhythm and makes it possible to
begin a new song. The player of the rattle is an outstanding
singer, who usually initiates the fresh refrain and continues
to sing its repetitions as soloist in the alternation of solo and
chorus which marks Haitian *vodun* singing as it marks most
West African and New World Negro religious music.

When a possession occurs, the songs for the deity who has 796
"arrived" are taken up as the drums play the rhythm of 787
the god. As his possession comes on, the devotee falls to the
ground, rolling before the drums, or staggers blindly about
the dancing-space, or otherwise follows the characteristic be-
havior attributed to his god. After a time he begins to dance, [793]
whereupon a *hunsi* or the *hungan*, taking a calabash of water [794]
in one hand and a lighted candle in the other, dances opposite
him, saluting the god as he performs his every movement in re-
verse; if he turns clockwise, the one dancing with him turns
counter-clockwise; if he moves to the right, the other moves to
the left. Except when executing these turns, the functionary
of the cult never takes his eyes from the eyes of the possessed
person, almost, as it were, hypnotizing him to help him come
to himself. Eventually the possessed one recovers sufficiently
to take the candle and the calabash of water in his own hands.
Often spilling water as he moves, he makes his way to the cen- [982]
tral pole, pouring an offering and making the sign of the cross [788]
with the candle before it.

●796 787 with the candle before it. He next does the same before the *ogan*, then before each of the drums in order, continuing to dance before the drums, usually with great violence, while the few "social" dancers who still may be circling about the center pole make way so that he may execute his steps. Gradually his dancing becomes calmed, until he is taken either to the *maison de servitude* or to a near-by house, where he rests and if, as often happens, he has rolled on muddy ground during his possession, washes and changes his clothes.

796 794 787 159 Several examples of the force of this tradition of being "mounted" by the *loa* may be given. One of these which is of especial interest concerns the possession of a man of good education, in the early thirties, who throughout his childhood and early manhood had had no association with the *vodun* cult, but had been encouraged by his family and his own ambition to promote the activities of the Catholic Church. In discussing his earlier experiences and background with one of his intimates, it seemed that on the side of both father and mother many of his relatives were affiliated with the cult, and it was recounted how, at an important ceremony at his ancestral habitation, some years before, he had become possessed. But it was also made clear that he had not been any the less active in the affairs of the Church because of this transient experience, nor had he affiliated himself in any way with any *vodun* group. Why he wished once more to participate in the *vodun* rituals cannot be said; certainly during the weeks immediately preceding his possession he had become interested in the philosophy of *vodun*, and his non-voduistic, if not anti-voduistic background seemed to accentuate his interest in ascertaining the hold of these rites, which had always been presented to him as repellent, on their followers. As an example of the duality of his interest, it may be stated that though he had remarked how "disgusting" it was to roll in the mud when possessed by Damballa, he had also been im-

pressed with the temerity of those who danced in the fire for 796
Legba. 794

At a certain dance, however, he volunteered to help in a 787 159 small way in promoting the activities of the evening, such as serving *clairin* to the drummers, while he himself danced the social dance about the central post of the *tonnelle*. As the tempo of the dance heightened, he became more deeply imbued with the spirit of the occasion and shouted: " If the *loa* comes to me, I will accept it! " as he plunged again into the circle of dancers. When the drums sounded the salute to the gods, he would awkwardly execute the accompanying backward turning movement of the figure.

After a time he left the *tonnelle*, but before many moments had elapsed a commotion was heard at the near-by *barrière*, where he was reeling in the first stage of possession, just inside the gate, while a fully possessed woman in a figured dress stalked back and forth. An *adjanikon*, with candle and calabash of water, was trying to " settle " his possession, but he fell to the ground and rolled on his back, lying prostrate with legs and arms outstretched and twitching. The *adjanikon*, putting aside the candle and water, lifted his limp body to its [533] feet and then slowly, according to the accepted pattern, holding [539] him upright, swayed with him in time to the song that all twelve or fifteen persons present were by now singing, until, staggering, the possessed man was able to support himself:

Damballa-o, Damballa-e,	Damballa-o, Damballa-e,
Damballa-o, Damballa Wedo,	Damballa-o, Damballa Wedo,
'Gadé ça ou fait' moin.	See what you have done to me.

Steadily fixing his eyes on the possessed one, the *adjanikon* now danced with him, turning always in the opposite direction as he offered him the candle and the water, which, how-

796 794 787 159 ever, the man was not yet able to hold. Moving backwards toward the *maison de servitude,* all the spectators continued to sing the song of Damballa, while the man to whom the god had come half-danced and was half-carried up the path to the *tonnelle* and taken into the family house of worship.

[788] When he had sufficiently recovered to be able to hold the candle and the water, he poured the water and unsteadily bowed three times in the accepted manner before the *couvert sec* to the Rada gods. He now was enough in control of himself to emerge, and, with the *adjanikon* dancing before him with water and a candle, he once again came into the *tonnelle,* before the drums. As he appeared, the drummers stopped the Ogun rhythm they had been sounding, and in an intense silence all waited for the god to announce himself. Half on his knees before the drums, the one possessed began to sing in a cracked voice: [538] [539]

Damballa Wedo,	Damballa Wedo,
Papa m' c'est coulev'-o,	Papa, I am a serpent-o,
Na poi' bois	There is no tree
Moin pa' li monté.	I cannot climb.

With this initial statement, the Damballa rhythm rolled from the drums, as all echoed the song in chorused response, while the possessed figure, in strict conformity to the pattern, first poured water at the central post and then consecutively before the iron and each of the drums. Returning to the central post, he whirled about it, almost but never quite falling, until he could dance before the drums, awkwardly but acceptably, before he disappeared to rest in a near-by house.

796 787 159 793 The explanation offered by this man of the manner in which he became possessed, and his varying attitudes toward his possession, are revealing. On several previous occasions the *hungan* who officiated at the dance had noticed that he was attending *vodun* rites and had joked with him about his interest in them. Once at an earlier dance this *hungan* had

given him a piercing glance, not without significance, for as 796
the man, who believed himself the victim of the *hungan's* 787
machinations, said, "Whatever you believe, these *hungans* 159
have some kind of power. . . ." On his arrival at the dance 993
where the possession occurred, the *hungan* had encountered this man sitting alone, some distance from the *tonnelle.* Giving him a drink of liquor, the *hungan,* as he pressed his hand in greeting, sportively turned him about in the manner in which possession is induced. After this the man recollected but little; he did not remember having said he would accept the god, or circling backwards, or bowing to the drums when the "salutes" were played. He dimly remembered having been sent to the *barrière* with some liquor for Bosu, who, not a Rada *loa,* had come unauthorized to one of the spectators and, according to custom, had been removed from the dancing-place. He also just recalled that a woman had become possessed by Legba, but did not know that it was when she touched him that his own possession had begun. The remainder of the night's experience was completely blank, even though the actual state of possession occupied only a small part of it.

Later during the dance, when he had returned, he was heard to say: "It was not a pretty trick that the *hungan* played on me"—a feeling not assuaged when, the next morning at mass, the priest in his sermon preached against following false gods and recounted the miseries in store for those who desert the true faith; nor when he reflected that, by his possession, he had in a sense become affiliated with a group whose position in society was anything but such as to enhance his own social status. The *hungan,* however, promised him that he would not bring on another possession, adding, as an aside: "It is good, though, that a Haitian should have this experience."
None the less, to make sure that this *loa bossal* would not 796
come to him at awkward moments, it was going to be neces- 787
sary for him to baptize it, thus continuing the process which 159

796 787 159 some termed his "Haitianization." There were those who expressed surprise at the occurrence, but the majority held that though this man had himself been a devout follower of the Church, and his parents before him, Damballa was a *loa* of his family, and therefore it was reasonable that it should come to him when called at a dance.

796 787 765 159 Another "unauthorized" possession, that of a woman in mourning, was also witnessed. Like the *service* of one night's duration, which this dance followed, it was but poorly organized and provided for, and in this it reflected the status of the family, which had but few resources, since its head had recently come into the valley and therefore lacked the backing which only his own relationship group could give him. Here there was no *maison de servitude,* and the *tonnelle* had been erected in an open field where the only shelter was offered by a crude hut near by. The *hungan* did not appear until late, while the host lived up to his reputation by drinking more *clairin* than was good for him. None the less, one violent possession by a *loa bossal* occurred relatively early in the evening, though the *loa* concerned did not "announce himself" through the song of the one he had possessed.

The woman in mourning sang continuously as she sat among the spectators, and since she was not supposed to dance, she executed dance movements in place. As the drumming became more and more *chaud* — "hot" — she became correspondingly more excited until, suddenly leaping from her seat, she began a frenzied dance. She refused the water and candle, however, and when finished with her dancing, she fell exhausted into her chair, where she remained in a coma during the next hour. She roused herself later and again joined the singing, but though she was near possession, this never came on. Her *loa,* like the other *loa bossal* that came earlier in the evening, did not "announce itself," and since it was her first — and not unwelcome — possession, she stated that at the termination of her period of mourning she would have a *hungan* divine its identity so that she might thereafter worship it and be under its protection. As in the other case discussed, the personality involved here is not without interest. The woman was one of the shrewdest traders in the Mirebalais market, and noted for her hardness. Underneath this, however, the presence of much vital energy could be felt as well as a passionate desire for gayety and attention from members of the other sex. That the essential lack of satisfaction of these drives in her life, as discussed and observed, figured in bringing on her possession cannot be doubted, and, as such, throws significant light on the nature of the psychological aspects of the phenomenon. 796 787 765 159

These instances, however, must not be thought of as a regular part of the ritual of the dances. Though a dance was attended almost every Saturday night during the course of an entire summer, and a number of *services* and other *vodun* rites in addition, these were the only occasions when a *loa bossal* appeared. In order, therefore, to document the pattern of the *vodun* dance that has already been given, some of the dances witnessed may be described in outline. 796

The first of these is a dance which, originally intended as the culmination of the *service* described in the preceding chapter, failed to fulfill its end because of a quarrel between two important members of the family. None the less, it proved to be one of the most spirited and typical dances witnessed. The habitation, when reached shortly after six o'clock, was deserted, except for a few people who seemed to be waiting disconsolately. Among them were several *hunsi* in white, and two who carried banners, while the three drums, each "dressed" in its skirt-like covering, stood before the entrance, the drumsticks and the *ogan* lying on the *barrière* itself. Since the *hungan* had not arrived, one or two of the men present took charge as darkness came on. Before this dance began, it was necessary to introduce the drums ceremonially into the compound, and as this was the first *vodun* dance after the es- [794] [534]

● 796 tablishment of the family *maison de servitude,* a special ritual for Legba at the *barrière* was required. [782] The one who took charge threw some rum on the *boucan* that had been made for Legba. Taking a candle, he struck the drums with it; then described *verver* and placed an egg on the white flour he piled just inside the *barrière.* 796 578 The rite proceeded no farther, however, for with the appearance of the head of the family, accompanied by his wife and son, who was the young man who had been possessed by Gede the first night of the *service,* a discussion arose which soon developed into a quarrel, because the family head felt that he had not been notified of this dance in the manner due his position. Finally with the cry: "If anything happens to the family because of this, I am not responsible," he departed in a rage. This was regarded as serious, because should a dance which ended an important rite be held with some of the family absent, the gods might be angered and serious consequences might follow. The woman, who had been instrumental in seeing that the *service* was given and had cared for most of the preparations, bravely decided to continue with the ritual, however, and the drumming was resumed.

796 533 Alcohol and flour were thereupon poured on the drumheads, while a number of songs were sung by all present:

539 [782]

Bonjou' manman, bonjou' papa,	Good-day, mamma, good-day, papa,
Ma p' mandé coumen nou' yè	I ask how are you.
Lan Guinée gangnin dent'.	In Guinea there are teeth.
Moin entré, moin entré,	I entered, I entered,
Ou pas salué moin.	You did not greet me.
Agoue-e, hunto	Agowe, hunto (spirit in the drum)
Agasu-e	Agasu-e
Agoué-e hunto, e-o.	Agowe hunto, e-o.

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Jean Pétro,	Jean Pétro,
Depuis moin sorti la ville	Since I left town
Moin apé cassé pié moin.	I have broken my foot.
Ça qui fait petit moun fronté.	That is what makes the children impertinent.
Yawé-é-é	Yawé-é-é,
Gedenibo Mazaca	Gedenibo Mazaca,
M'apé rhélé Saints forts	I call the strong saints,
Yawé-é	Yawé-é-é,
Saints forts-é-é	Strong gods-é-é.
P'ti Garçon Lemba,	Little boy Lemba,
P'ti' pilon ça,	A small pestle he.
Na pilé yo, Lemba-o.	Crush them, Lemba-o.

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[794]

Finally the instruments were lifted over the *barrière*, the *ogan* and rattles first, then the drums in order from smallest to largest, followed by the spectators. Ahead of the procession were *hunsi* with flags, and all continued singing until the *maison de servitude* and the *tonnelle* used during the *service* were reached.

The drums were carried about the house three times in procession before being taken inside. There, facing the place where the food had been offered — for the house was as yet quite bare, with no suggestion of an altar — the drums were beaten and songs sung to the Rada gods whose sanctuary this was. Though at the moment none of the good drummers had arrived, the drums were placed in line with the north end of the house, and the drumming for the dance commenced. Dancing began about the center pole, but no possessions occurred until shortly after eight o'clock. By that time better drummers had come, and the crowd had so increased that the drums were moved to accommodate those dancing, the drummers now having their backs to the front wall of the sacred house. A candle was attached to a peg of each drum, which,

● 796 [354] [87] A candle was attached to a peg of each drum, which, with the lantern that hung near the central post, gave unusually good light. However, as possessions began, the candles on the drums were extinguished as those possessed fell against them, and no more than one could be kept lighted.

793 776 539 796 With the arrival of the *hungan* at about half past nine, the dancing became even more animated, and Ogun "came" as soon as he took over the *manman* drum, but despite this, the *hungan* continued the ritual invocation to call all the *loa:*

Moin rhelé Papa Legba, St. Jo,	I call Papa Legba, St. Joseph,
Moin rhelé Damballa papa,	I call Papa Damballa,
Moin rhelé Papa Damballa, St. Jo,	I call Papa Damballa, St. Joseph,
Moin rhelé Loko Atinsu, St. Jo.	I call Loko Atinsu, St. Joseph.
La vie nan mains Bon Dieu,	Life is in the hands of God,
Seigneur, moin rhelé Ogun Ferraille, St. Jo.	Master, I call Ogun Ferraille, St. Joseph.
Moin rhelé Damballa Wedo,	I call Damballa Wedo,
Moin rhelé Aida Wedo, Seigneur.	I call Aida Wedo, Master.
La vie nan mains Bon Dieu.	Life is in the hands of God.
Moin rhelé Papa Agasu, St. Jo, Dokwe Agwe,	I call Papa Agasù, St. Joseph, Dokwe Agwe,
Moin rhelé Maît' Ossange,	I call Master Ossange,
Moin rhelé Maît' St. Jean,	I call Master St. John,
Moin rhelé Gran' Siligbo,	I call Gran' Siligbo,
Moin rhelé Agwe Woyo,	I call Agwe Woyo,
Moin rhelé Loa 'Bitation,	I call the *loa* of the habitation,

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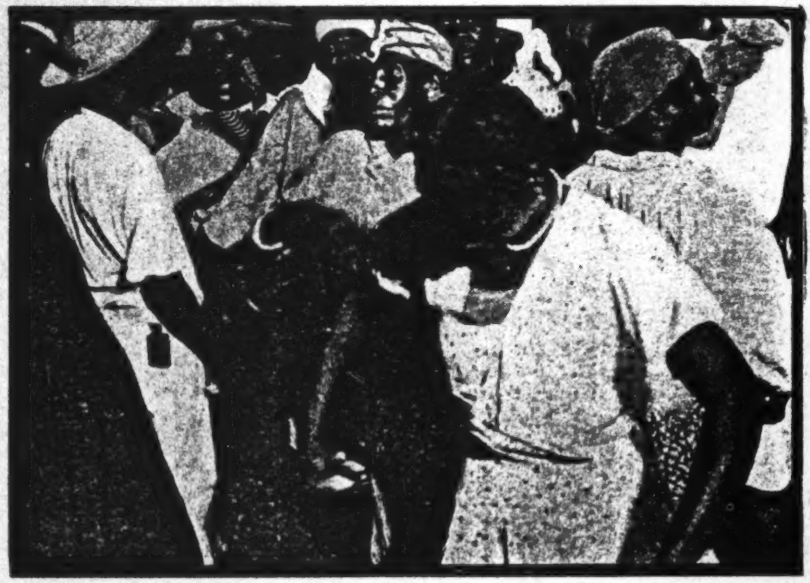

AT A VODUN DANCE

ABOVE, *The dancers crowding about the central post of the shelter.*
BELOW, *Drums and drummers.*

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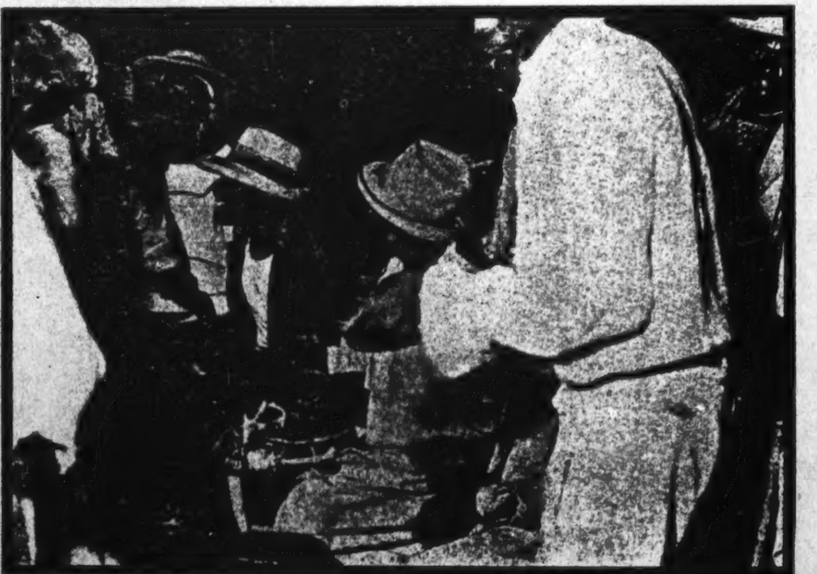

[facing p. 193]

793

796 [776] [539]

Moin rhelé Aizan,	I call Aizan,
Moin rhelé Sobo, St. Jo, Dokwe Agwe,	I call Sobo, St. Joseph, Dokwe Agwe,
Moin rhelé Papa Gede,	I call Papa Gede,
Moin rhelé toutes mystères.	I call all the gods.

When he had ended his song a number of the "salutes" were played on the drums, to which all danced backward in circles, ending the figure in bows before the drums, which were rolling out the call.. In the course of the evening a large number of gods were summoned, but, as would be expected, only the *loa* of the family came to this ceremony. Possessions were observed for Legba, Damballa, Ogun Balandjo, Ogun Galloné, Ogun Ferraille, Gede, and Kadya Bosu. St. John, Ossange, Aizan, Ashadé Bokor, Gran' Bosu, Magie, Jean Pétro, Congo, Guinée, Sobo, Bade, and Agwe Woyo, were the *loa* who refused their summons. Though no deity held the center of the stage for too long a time, the evening was notable because it was marked by an unusually large number of Ogun and Damballa possessions, which seemed constantly to alternate. Damballa being the stronger *loa,* his appearance when Ogun was present necessitated the retirement of the latter; but since the possession of Ogun by one woman was particularly persistent, this god returned again and again. As at a number of dances, the *haut chant* for Ogun Galloné, the French marching-song that salutes the "general," was among the songs heard, when those possessed by the god skipped from one end of the *tonnelle* to the other before the drums.

796 787 [793] [776] [533]

One particularly striking Damballa possession came on suddenly. As a tall, strong man was seized by the god, he gave a great shout and grasped the beams of the *tonnelle,* disappearing upward through the thatch. For a moment it did not seem that he had climbed on the roof of the *tonnelle,* until a head and arms which appeared between the palm fronds showed he

796 787 [794] was there. To bring him down, a *hunsi* holding water and a candle at once began slowly to dance under him, fixing him with the usual unvarying stare. After some five minutes the candle and water were quickly given to those near by, and in a flash the possessed one was safely on the ground, candle in hand, pouring water before the center pole and the drums, and dancing magnificently.

796 793 780 593 Shortly after midnight the head of the family and his wife returned to the scene of the dance, the explanation given for this return revealing the native conception of the power of the *hungan*. Before his arrival, it was said he had been told of the quarrel; hence on his way to the dance he passed the *barrière* of the house of the family head, though he did not stop to speak with him. Prior to leaving his home, however, he was supposed to have performed a rite which, soon after he began drumming at the dance, so affected the children of the family head that they became possessed and at once ran to the *tonnelle*. Since their children were present, the father and mother were forced to come, and this was followed by a reconciliation of those who had quarreled. To make doubly sure that the *loa* would take no offense, however, another dance which formally ended the *service* was given jointly by all members of the family several weeks later.

796 787 One phase of the ceremonial always encountered, but unusually frequent on this occasion, was the salutation of the assembled company by the *loa*. One woman, possessed by Ogun, greeted all present first by shaking hands with wrists crossed in the customary manner, and then kissing each person on both cheeks. Another, possessed by Ossange, took the neckerchief from about his neck and wiped the faces of all those present, paying particular attention to the drummers. The son of the family head was again possessed by Gede as at the *service*, and his greeting to the assembled company was especially dramatic. His possession took the form of a hysteri-

cal, rapid, continuous jumping, with the body held rigid. As 796
he bobbed up and down, holding his candle under his chin 787
so that the light distorted his features and emphasized the vacant stare in his eyes, he monotonously repeated the sharp sounds of his god: "*Ke-ke-ke-ke-ke-ke-ke!*" or "*Hoi! Hoi! Hoi!*" Standing before some, he would greet them by taking their crossed hands in his strong grip and bringing them down in a single movement that shook the entire body. Once he removed the red kerchief he wore, extending it as an indication he wished gifts of money; he used it to wipe the perspiration from the faces of others; while he would merely run his hands through the hair of still others.[4]

As daybreak neared, the crowd thinned, so that by half 796
past five few of the good drummers or important men remained. Persons who had been sleeping roused themselves, and there was a general exodus. Most of those who had been at the dance did not go to sleep, however, for early Sunday morning mass an hour later found them at the church saying their prayers and listening to the sermon of the priest.

In contrast, another dance visited was noteworthy for its 796
many and varied possessions. It was held at the habitation of 787
one of the fathers-in-law of a *hungan*, and began somewhat later, the drums not arriving until almost eight o'clock. Only a minor ceremony was necessary to bring them through this gateway. The host three times poured water inside the gate, while three men played on the drums and a fourth tapped the
ogan for a moment. The proceedings began when an elderly [533]
hunsi summoned Legba, invoking in her song Siligbo Vavou, Dahomey, Ogun, Bade, and "all *loa*." The *hungan* who was host himself arrived at nine o'clock, and the excellence of his drumming caused one possession to follow another with great rapidity. The dance was a large one, and by midnight there were at least two hundred persons in attendance, while at one time fifty or more were dancing about the central post and as many as seven or eight were possessed at once.

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many as seven or eight were possessed at once. During the night of this dance the following thirty-one *loa* "came" in the order named:

Ossange Damballa Wedo
Sobo
Bumba
Congo
Si Adaman
Simbi Djo
Agasu Tèmèré
Damballa
Odansil Yewe
Ogun Ferraille
Bosu Trois Cornes
Bosu d'l'eau
Simbi (nan d'l'eau)
Damballa Wedo
Simbi Kita
Papa Loko Dahomey
Ogun Batala
Ogun Batagri
Ogun Balandjo
Ogun Shango
Maît' Ogun
Ogun Ferraille
Ogun Ashadé
Ibo Lélé
Ossange
Agau (Maît' Woyo)
Maît' Aizan
Shango
Damballa
Simbi en Deux Eaux
Bosu

The only deity that was called but failed to respond was Gran' Bra. And it is to be noted that both Rada and Pétro gods "came" in response to the summons, though *loa* of the two categories were not present under the *tonnelle* at the same time. Each person possessed was looked after very carefully, women's ear-rings being taken off so that they would not be lost, the contents of men's pockets being emptied, and knives always being removed from their sheaths. When one man was violently possessed by Papa Loko Dahomey and danced "strongly," attempts were made to wrest from him the walking-stick he carried. They were not successful, however, and all dodged him as he brandished it. The *hungan* host was always present to take the possessed one inside the house which formed one side of the *tonnelle*, to "treat" him.

A number of comments on the possessions by several of the

gods may be made. Si Adaman, known as a *loa* Dominicaine, 787
possessed a woman who, with another possessed by Sobo, came 776
to greet the white visitors and ask for *kola*, a non-alcoholic 776 ●
drink much desired by Rada gods. The woman possessed by Agasu Tèmèré was also at one time or another during this dance "mounted" by ten other *loa*. On one occasion, when possessed by this Rada deity, she went to the *barrière* because under the *tonnelle* they were dancing for Simbi — "who is not of my family." Asking another dancer to whom Sobo had come to accompany her, she sang "Saddle and bridle my mount for me," and "Sobo goes with Agasu; he stays in my house." Historically this is significant, since Agasu is the deified ancestor of the royal Dahomean sib, and Sobo the Dahomean god of thunder.

Bosu Trois Cornes came violently to a young girl dressed in red. She was taken inside the house against which the *tonnelle* had been erected, and while a number of men held her, the *hungan* worked over her. She was in a dangerous state, for 'Ti Kita Demembré, who is much feared, often goes with Bosu, and in this instance of what was said to be a first possession was believed to be "not far away" because of the rigidity with which the arms of the girl were held, in positions almost to dislocate them. The *hungan* scolded the *loa* — "Be off! You are not wanted here!" After the girl had been brought far enough through her possession to pour water and take a candle before the drums, she was sent home, carefully attended. It was held absolutely essential that there be no delay before baptizing her *loa* and sending away its harmful companions; otherwise, when possession next occurred, she might do harm to herself.

Early in the morning one of the several visiting *hungans* 796
became possessed by Damballa, and, imitating the serpent, 787
climbed through the roof of the *tonnelle*. The priest who was host, after bringing him down, danced with him, carrying his guest, still possessed, about the dancing-space on his back as

● 796 787 a great outcry of acclamation was heard from those present. Afterwards the visitor, always under the influence of his god, greeted everyone with the crossed-arm handshake of the *loa*,* and ended by dancing opposite the young woman to whom so many gods came — now possessed by still another deity.

796 546 This dance offered an especially striking demonstration of the hold of the Church on the people of Mirebalais. Feeling that motion pictures of an actual *vodun* dance should be made available so that the real nature of the ceremony could be demonstrated and comparisons made between the Haitian and Dahomean practices of which his visitors had told him, the *hungan* himself made all effort to continue the dance until the morning light would permit pictures to be taken; as an inducement to remain, additional *clairin* and biscuits were provided. As daylight approached, however, on one of the few mornings when no early fog obscured the light, the participants began to slip away, so that by sunrise only the usual fifteen or twenty young folk shuffling about the central post were to be seen. Later, in the village, the procession held the first Sunday of each month before the principal mass of the day passed through the square. Many of those who, as dancers or possessed ones, had been active in this *vodun* dance could be seen in it; while next to the priest himself marched the woman who had been possessed by her eleven *vodun* gods during the night just ended.

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ABOVE, *At a* vodun *dance: those possessed whirling about the central post.*

BELOW, *Making the* vodun *drum: describing the sign of the cross with lighted candles over the unheaded bodies.*

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[facing p. 244]

especially by the drummers. Experience among other Caribbean 533
Negro cultures and in Africa itself has failed to reveal 535
greater skill in calling forth intricate rhythms from batteries [171]
of drums than can be found at any Haitian religious gathering.
The enthusiasm with which a man takes his place at a
drum, the manner in which he loses himself in his drumming,
the skill with which he maintains the time of his complex
beats in common with two other drummers and those who
manipulate the rattles and the iron, bespeak long training and
a passionate devotion to the art. The same is true of dancing.
The best drummer, the finest dancer, hold positions of esteem [554]
in the community, and on occasion their fame will go beyond
the valley, an occurrence as unusual as it is valued. The excellence 533
of the drumming and dancing and the concomitant 535
artistry in song can be understood when one considers the age 868
at which training is begun in these arts. At Mirebalais an infant
of no more than two years has been seen to dance creditably,
while a young boy of six gave a demonstration of drumming
that spoke eloquently of his promise as a drummer of
talent. Before every *vodun* dance the boys take over the drums
while the younger girls dance to their rhythms. They are
watched with a critical eye by their elders, who from time to
time correct them or praise those who do well.

The accompanying musical forms are almost entirely African 533
in their rhythmic structure, but European influence is 177
traceable in their melodic line, which varies from unchanged 178
European folk-melodies to purely African songs. In the use of
the falsetto, however, in the statement of a theme by a leader
and its repetition by a chorus, and in the countless modulations
introduced into the song, the singing is entirely African,
as are the postures struck by those singing.

The importance of the dance is apparent from the large 535
range of dances. Of *vodun* dances there are the *avalou*, or *yanvalou*, 177
a word meaning supplication in the speech of Whydah; 178
the specialized steps for the various Rada and Pétro gods; for 196

535 177 178 096 *magic* and for the Congo, Ibo, and Nago *loa;* the *mazon*, as an interlude dance between possessions; and steps of the *asague*, or salute to the gods. There is also the Martinique cycle of secular dances, including the *zesse, callebasse,* and *banda;* the *rara* dances found only at Easter time, and the social Congo dances. Finally European dancing, called *bal*, is performed to the sound of a drum, a phonograph record, or a small orchestra. With a qualified exception of the last, the type of dancing in all these is African. The essence of style in these dances lies in the manipulation of feet and the muscles of the body, particularly those of shoulders, hips, and buttocks, the patterns of which have been carried over in their entirety from the aboriginal homeland. For men and women to dance with arms about each other, as do Europeans, is still regarded in Mirebalais as immoral.

538 178 The trait of African culture that has survived most tenaciously in all the New World, even where European influence has been strongest, is that of folk-literature — of tales, proverbs, and riddles.[7] Though these have flourished in Haiti as elsewhere, prolonged story-telling sessions, so characteristic of other Negro groups, were not encountered in Mirebalais. It is likely that this is principally a seasonal phenomenon, and the failure to find long evenings of story-telling during the summer months, when the rains are at their height and work in the fields is hardest, may properly be an expression of this seasonal variation. As elsewhere in Negro societies, tales and riddles are told at wakes, though their enjoyment by children and their function as a part of the education of the child are as important as in Africa itself. The familiar types of African animal stories and the tales of human tricksters and magicians are well known, and well told. The figure who corresponds to Br'er Rabbit, or to the spider Anansi, is the little 'Ti Malice, while the foil for his pranks is the great awkward Bouki.[8]

One folkloristic element that gives Haitian life a strong African flavor is the proverb, which, as elsewhere in Negro

makes for deification of the family dead, but constitutes the 776
oldest ancestor of a relationship group one of the great gods 771
and thus causes families to give primary allegiance to a re- 778
stricted number of deities. The most striking aspect of this 424
tradition preserved in Haiti is that all ceremonies must be 769
given by family groups, and at them only members of the fam- 787
ily may with propriety become possessed. Possession itself, and 796 ●
the elements which constitute the possession complex — the 771
use of the drums, the rhythms associated with particular gods, 778
the importance of songs in calling the spirits, the mode of 53
worship through specific dances for specific deities — these
make up another series of Africanisms. In the dance itself the
use of iron to sound basic rhythms for the drums, the outer
form and function of the rattle, and the fact that the circle of
participants always rotates in a counter-clockwise direction,
are equally African. The modes of behavior to be observed as
possession comes on and the psychological release that follows
it both derive from the same source, as do the beliefs that rit-
uals must be held on the days sacred to the particular god
being worshipped.

Another retention of African tradition is a belief in the im- 771
portance of sacrifice. It will be remembered that it is held to 778
be more essential to "feed" the gods than to dance for them. 782
This is also the tradition of all peoples of the region from
which the slaves were derived, and in a sense reflects the very
immediate relationship that obtains between Africans, or
Haitians, and their gods. Since in both regions each deity per-
forms the double role of doing good for those who worship
it properly and harassing those who neglect it, the importance
of giving adequate sacrifices to avert evil is evident. In both
Haiti and Africa, however, these may differ with the wealth of
the individual giving the offering, with the number of persons
who contribute toward the ceremony where offerings are
given, or with the seriousness of the situation which the deity
is being asked to remedy. That the gods permit such varia-

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for all uses to which those of their type are put. During their 778 making and after their completion they had been sanctified 788 by rites that vividly illustrate the merging of traditions in [777] Haitian religion: by means of offerings to the African gods, and through baptism by the rites of the Church.[2]

The *action de grâce* is another integral part of *vodun* cere- 796 monialism that is essentially Catholic, since its lengthy service 777 is composed entirely of prayers and hymns of the Church. As 778 has been shown, the *action de grâce,* which precedes a *vodun service,* takes place before an "altar" which, important both then and at the later, more African rites, in itself documents in no small measure the combining of Catholicism and *vodun*. One, employed at a *service* not described in the earlier chapters, was covered with a red and white checked table-cloth, on top of which a smaller white cloth was spread.* Pinned to the [553] canopy and to the front of the table-cloth were various chromolithographs of the saints; [776] St. Michael attacking the Devil, Mater Dolorosa, St. James, the Virgin Mary and Jesus (the Assumption), and St. Expeditius. In front of the representation of St. James stood a crucifix with the figure of Jesus, in accordance with the custom of never omitting to have one of these at any *vodun* ceremonial. The table bore many offerings; at the back were four bottles of soft drinks, with cups; while also to be seen were several hard rolls, an ear of corn, a dish containing eggs, and another holding, among other things, rice. One of the containers on the table held holy water, while candles for use both in the *action de grâce* and in the later *vodun* rituals lay beside this. Thus crucifix, candles, pictures of the saints, and holy water were combined in this ceremony with offerings of food and drink to be given the gods that the ancestors had brought from Africa.* The songs [538] sung at the voduistic portions of these *services* also reflect [539] the psychological unity of Catholic and African elements in *vodun* worship. One of these declares:

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* This altar is shown in the illustration facing p. 192.

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Je crois en Dieu,	I believe in God,
Oui, Santa Maria.	Yes, St. Mary.
Santa Maria,	St. Mary,
Qui sorté nan Guinée.	Who came from Guinea.
Je crois en Dieu,	I believe in God,
Oui, Santa Maria.	Yes, St. Mary.

Another for the Virgin of Allada, sung in Leogane, is as follows:

Santa Maria la Madaleine,	St. Mary Magdalene
Prié pou' loa yo.	Pray for their *loa.*
O Allada-e,	O Allada-e,
Sonné une sonne pou' moin,	Ring a bell for me,
Pour m'allé.	So I may go.
M'dit, Allada-o,	I say, Allada-o,
Sonné une sonne	Ring a bell
Pou' les pitites nagé.	For the drowned children.

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Of these elements, the portraits of the saints, or *images,* offer one of the most vivid instances of the mingling of African and European elements in Haitian belief, for they are the outward symbol of the psychological reconciliation that has been effected between the saints of the Church and the African deities. This is nothing peculiar to Haiti alone. In West Africa, wherever Catholicism has obtained something of a foothold, certain pagan deities are regularly identified with saints of the Church, and the same phenomenon is found in Cuba [*] and Brazil.[*] This identification of saints with the *loa,* whether initiated as a ruse against the detection of African worship or emanating from a reasoned analogy, would seem in Haiti, at least, to act as a device to achieve an adjustment between two conflicting systems by emphasizing the resemblance between Catholic saints and African nature deities. The importance of the *images* as symbolizing the reconcilia-

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> 177 776 534 overturn his memory, overturn his thought, overturn his house, overturn for me my enemies visible and invisible; cause the thunder and the tempest to break them into pieces. And in honor of St. Bouleversé, three Paters and three Ave Marias. . . .[8]

771 177 796 Thus it is seen how Catholicism invades the beliefs and rites of the *vodun* cult. In an analogous fashion *vodun* has not failed to make itself felt in certain festivals of the Church,[9] for while elements of *vodun*, rigidly suppressed inside the Catholic churches, are absent except in so far as they can be carried on surreptitiously, they are nevertheless integral parts of these fêtes in the minds of the folk who make pilgrimages to them. So arresting is the resulting mingling of practices, and so significant for the amalgamation of cultures that has taken place in Haiti, that a detailed discussion will be given of the most prominent instance of this type, the festival in honor of the Virgin of the Palms, which takes place each year on July fifteenth at Ville-Bonheur, or, as it is better known, at Saut d'Eau. The festival of 1926 has been described by Price-Mars;[10] here certain observations made during the fête of 1934 may be given, especially as they have to do with those aspects of the mythology which validate the festival, and as they illustrate the non-Catholic, voduistic phases of the celebration, of importance for the points being considered in this chapter.

778 177 787 [776] [538] Beside the church, Ville-Bonheur has three especially sacred spots, St. John, En bas Palmes, and Saut d'Eau — the falls themselves. At St. John is a large *campêche* tree surrounded by many palms, from beneath which flow streams of water. St. John is said to have appeared here, carrying his scepter as in the chromolithographs, and at that time water began to flow in the sacred springs, and except for one short period has continued ever since as holy water, being used for drinking and bathing, but never for purposes of cooking. The priests

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AT SAUT D'EAU

ABOVE, *Large crowds of worshippers drawn by this fête of the Church.*
BELOW, *Possession coming on as a vodun deity "mounts the head" of a devotee who, climbing a tree, exhorts those gathered to hear him.*

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[facing p. 283]

778 turned to leave, word came that his house had burned
776 and nothing in it was saved. Later he suffered a paralytic
173 stroke from which he never recovered. Some say that the
177 American captain became ill and was sent to the States
787 "as a punishment for what he had done." Several days later the sergeant was found mad, wandering in the woods. Since he had fired under orders, however, his punishment was but temporary, and on being cured he returned to Ville-Bonheur to ask pardon of the Virgin. Today he lives in Mirebalais. When they saw the American ill, the priest paralyzed, the sergeant mad, and the presbytery burned, "public clamor" became so strong that both St. John and En bas Palmes were reopened.[11]

778 In 1932 a cyclone at St. John tore down trees and houses and
731 hurt but did not kill the worshippers who had gathered there.
177 An eyewitness insisted he had seen the enormous whirling cloud rise from the sacred place. He had no time to reach his house, for with a noise like a cannon-shot the whirlwind came, and an enormous oak tree fell just behind him — "I saw death staring at me." Today he carries two scapularies to the Virgin to protect him.

778 The third sacred spot is at the falls themselves, where the
● 796 grandeur and beauty of the scene is such as to induce the re-
787 ligious thrill almost unaided, and where great numbers go in
177 the course of their pilgrimage to Ville-Bonheur. There are
[788] two falls, situated at a distance of several miles from the village, one for Damballa and one for Aida Wedo, and it is believed that those who bathe in the sacred streams become possessed. It is said that the palms near by are sacred to the Virgin, but others hold that they are for Damballa. Many visit the falls on the day preceding the fête, but the largest throng hurries there immediately after the principal mass, when the greatest number of possessions and the most violent seizures by the *loa* occur. The falls, therefore, in association

778 796 177 The falls, therefore, in association with the purely Catholic rituals carried on at the village church, are seen to hold an important if unofficial place in the complex of rites known in the Haitian Church calendar as the Fête of Saut d'Eau.

778 796 78 177 [494] During the two or three days preceding the fête and on the fifteenth of July itself, an air of great gayety not unlike the carnival spirit accompanying European Church festivals pervades the surrounding country. Camions traverse the almost impassable side road, bringing crowds of people from Port-au-Prince, from the Dominican border, and even from the north, who throng the streets and the shrines and tramp the miles from the village to the waterfalls or visit the nearer sacred sites of St. John's Wood and En bas Palmes, to light candles and ask the satisfaction of their needs. Like the falls themselves, these spots by their very beauty awaken a sense of emotional awareness, and it is not strange that here, as at the falls, many possessions occur. At night, in particular, the great trees with their interlacing serpent-like roots, the gaping earth which at En bas Palmes is witness to the uprooting of the palm trees where the miracle occurred, and the stream of sacred water, all make a scene of indescribable eeriness, heightened by the flickering candles given as offerings, and the open lamps of those who stay the night here to fulfill their vows.

796 784 177 [524] [526] [535] [782] [292] [755] In the town itself gambling and other games go on, and dances of all kinds are held at night, among them *vodun* and *bal,* though at these public dances no possessions are countenanced. One of the most colorful aspects of the scene is the *penitants,* wearing clothing of varied colors in fulfillment of a request by the *loa* they worship or an obligation to them. Such folk are not permitted in church unless the clothing which marks them is covered by ordinary dress, but they walk the streets, often possessed and often using their power to heal those whom they encounter. Possessions by Ogun, by Gede, by Baron Samedi, by Damballa, by Erzilie and other *vodun* deities were observed, particularly at the shrines, where their devotees prophesied and healed the sick.

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796 devotees prophesied and healed the sick. Even at the church,
782 however, where all go to offer the prayers that are the central
776 observance of the fête, the many candles placed on the rocks at
177 the entrance are usually for St. Anthony;
that same St. Anthony who, it will be recalled, is the *loa* named Legba, the guardian of all entrances.

771 It is obvious, from the examples given, that the world view
177 held by the Haitian and the motivations which underlie
Haitian life cannot be understood unless both the Catholic and the *vodun* contributions to them are held in mind. But certain further questions bearing upon the effect of these two influences present themselves. What proportion of Haitians hold membership in the Church, and how many are affiliated with the *vodun* sect? What attitudes are manifested toward the Church and its priests as contrasted with their attitude toward the *loa* and their ministrants? How does the Church meet the challenge of *vodun*? And how does the Haitian peasant, in his inner life, reconcile these two conflicting forces?

The impression gained from reading available works on
Haiti is that voduists and Catholics constitute two distinct
[184] groups. While this may obtain in some parts of the Republic,
it is not true either in Mirebalais or in those other portions of Haiti which came under direct though brief observation in the course of this study. All discussions with natives that began with the assumption of the existence of two such separate groups led to confusion, and statements which had seemed evasions were not clarified until the incorrectness of such an assumption became apparent. Thus when it was stated that in all Haiti the Pater Noster was one of the first things taught every child, the question: " Is this not true for Catholic families only? " was met with a vigorous denial that was slowly justified as the realization grew that, if not true for all Haitians, such an assertion was certainly valid for the vast majority of them in Mirebalais and probably elsewhere.[18] The identity of membership in the two groups became apparent from ob-

000 796 794 114 contents, is given by Wirkus, 178–9.

Compare this description with the *humfort* pictured in Johnston, p. 194.

796 794 114 It is to be emphasized that in the course of the *vodun* rituals witnessed during this field-work, none of the "frenzy of the blood lust" that is so favorite an aspect of these ceremonies with writers of books on Haiti was encountered. As an extreme example of this heightening of the tone with which a ceremony is described, the work of Seabrook may be cited, for phrases such as "blood-maddened, sex-maddened, god-maddened" used by him mark perhaps an all-time record for distortion of the inner discipline of the *vodun* cult. 796 114

Cf. Parsons's brief sketch, (I), 172–3, of a *mangé loi,* though the "bloody anointing" of which she speaks was not seen to occur in Mirebalais *services.* Detailed descriptions of what apparently were *services* are given by Wirkus, 168 ff., who, though honest in recounting what he saw, realized nothing of its significance; and Seabrook (pp. 54–70), who reads so much into what he purports to have witnessed that the entire account is rendered useless.

CHAPTER X

[1] Compare Parsons (I), 167–72.

796 184 273 The drunkenness at serious dances reported by Parsons (I), 172, and others, would not be tolerated in Mirebalais.

[3] Price-Mars (I), 208, gives the name of *assotór* for the great drum.

202 114 [4] Much nonsense has been written concerning these drums. Many writers — all non-Haitians — stress the existence of a drum language, which seems to be an assertion of dubious truth.

[5] This is a striking example of what Dorsainvil (I), 73–4 and 131 ff., calls the *masque vôduique* in detailing the effects of possession on the features of the possessed. See also the discussion of possession in Price-Mars (I), 122–3. The Gede possession described by Craige, 73–4, must, on the basis of customary Haitian behavior under possession, be subject to reinterpretation.

[6] Cf. Parsons (I), 170.

2: Courlander SV3 Haiti SV3

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[For a listing of cult and ritualistic dances, see category 116, pp. 134-136.]

in many details. But, in general, the cult establishment consists of a central 346
building of one or more rooms with an adjoining court, or peristyle,
over which there is a covering—usually a straw roof. The covering, called
the *tonnelle,* is supported by a number of poles, one of which is placed
squarely in the center of the court. This center pole—the *po'teau mitan* or 346
po'teau planté—is the focus of most of the ritual activities. The loa who 796
descend upon the service enter by way of this pole. The ritual *vèvès,* or [776]
flour paintings, are made at its foot. Around it all the dancing takes place.
On certain rare occasions when rituals are held in the open, a carefully
selected tree becomes the center post—though it is by no means certain
that the po'teau mitan is not, in fact, a symbolic tree.

The building adjoining the peristyle contains the inner sanctum. Here 346
are deposited the paraphernalia of the cult, such as ritual bottles and jars, 794
flags of the société, and the iron kettles used in various ceremonies. On the 778
walls there may be primitive paintings of the special loa of the hounfor, 776
or perhaps of his symbol. The loa of the sea, Agwé, may be represented 353
by a ship. Damballa, the serpent-rainbow loa, may be represented by a [796]
snake or a rainbow. Usually there are colored lithographs of Catholic
saints, who have both Catholic and African names. And there are hand-beaten
iron crosses, dishes containing Indian celts in which loa are believed
to reside, gourd bowls, and carved wooden double and triple bowls
used for services to dead twins and triplets. Upon the altar place, called
badji, there are the *criches* or *govis,* earthen jars or bottles in which rest
the loa removed from the heads of people who have died. Sometimes
special niches are built on the hounfor grounds for the deities. Each cult
priest designs his hounfor in his own way.

A hounfor belonging to a mambo near the town of Croix des Missions 346
gave the appearance of having a large and prosperous société. Under the 794
tonnelle eight beautifully carved Arada drums were suspended from a 353
single peg. At a respectable distance hung a Martinique drum used only 778
for dances on the occasion of a Nine Night. Inside the hounfor was an [534]
impressive display of sacred objects and decorations. One corner of the [796]
room was reserved for Symbi Yendézo, a patron loa of drinking water [776]
and rainfall. He was portrayed on the wall as a long, thin snake crawling
in a maze of crosses. On the ground beneath the picture was a small concrete
pool, in which two water snakes swam. Another corner was reserved
for Agwé, and on his wall was a picture of a steamship. Along the back
of the altar was an impressive array of govis, containing the spirits removed
from the heads of deceased persons. There was a large plate of loa
stones, and various protective charms stood near by. Flags and sabres

5. Services for the Loa and the Family Ancestors

The Ordeal by Fire: Kanzo

To advance beyond the lowest status in the hounfor, the hounsi must 794
undergo the test of fire. This ritual is known as *kanzo*, meaning "to tie 789
fire." In the drama of the hounfor there are many tests and ordeals. When 796
certain loa enter, the mounted persons will eat broken glass. Other loa 787
will cause their "horses" to rub hot pepper in their eyes. Still others will compel possessed persons to cut themselves with machetes. But these are bravado actions of the deities who have entered into the bodies of the servitors. The kanzo test is a formalized and premeditated ritual, in which it is demonstrated that the power of the cult—and the spirit of the individual—is superior to fire. Once having passed through this rite, the ordinary hounsi becomes a *hounsi kanzo*.

The kanzo ceremony—or, as it is known in some parts of Haiti, the *brulé zin* (the boiling pot)—is performed in diverse ways according to the tradition of the particular hounfor. But common to all is the dipping of the hands into boiling oil.

The common hounsi, the bossale, is prepared gradually for kanzo. In the course of certain rites she undergoes a smoke ordeal. On all fours, her head close to a fire, she must breathe in smoke without choking or coughing. When these and other tests indicate that she is ready, she will be permitted to undergo the rite of the brulé zin.

Near the town of Thomazeau in the Cul-de-Sac Plain I witnessed one of these rituals. It began with a dance, in which only the hounsi of the cult participated. They were all dressed in white. The chief drummer wore a woman's blouse, a kerchief on his head, and on top of that a woman's
straw hat. He played alone while the houngan invoked the loa Legba. [793]
Then there were songs for Ogoun, and the dancing resumed.

The dance court was larger than average—about forty feet by sixty.

793 794 787 ●796 789

Attached to the ever-present po'teau mitan, or center post, were three oil lamps which threw a flickering light. At the entrance to the dance court a glowing-hot iron bar stood erect in a charcoal fire—the symbol of kanzo and of the loa Ogoun.

When the preliminary dances were over, the hounsi retired to one side of the court, where they sat in two rows facing the center.

Ritual rattle and bell in hand, the houngan took his place by the sacred center post. He was an elderly man with a gray beard. He wore a red kerchief like a turban around his head. He smoked a cigar, and in his free hand he held a bottle of rum. The red kerchief, the rum, and the cigar were all in honor of Ogoun. He moved back and forth across the center of the court, talking casually, even joking and laughing. The drums began again, on a signal from the houngan, and a number of visiting houngans [535] and mambos came forward and began a stately Jenvalo dance. The backs of their hands touching their knees, their backs bent low, they moved slowly counterclockwise around the center post. The mambos outnumbered the houngans four to one. The hounsi sitting on the sidelines sang. The song was for Maîtresse Ézilie. The houngan in charge stood by patiently, deep in thought. His assistant, the laplace, kept time with a small rattle and led the singing.

When the song came to an end, the visiting cult priests and priestesses retired from the dance ground. Again the hounsi danced. Afterward the houngan began to talk *langage,* twirling his bottle of rum about recklessly. He was speaking to a loa. The chief drummer beat out a salute to Ogoun. Then the houngan raised the bottle and placed it to his ear. It gurgled away, some of the liquid trickling down his face. He seemed to be swallowing the rum.

While all the hounsi, with bowed heads, sat on the ground, the houngan recited from the ritual of the Catholic service. Latin words, then Creole words in Latin cadences. After a while the houngan's assistant took over the recitation, and the hounsi answered him responsively.[1] When the prayers were over, the hounsi arose and passed into the hounfor. The drums began a fast Nago rhythm, and the hounsi emerged with brilliant silk flags studded with tiny brass rivets. The houngan's chief assistants—the laplace and the houngénicon—carried military sabers upraised. The dancers circled in single file around the center post, a triumphal military heralding of the deity of war and the forge.

To the accompaniment of a crescendo of drums, the procession suddenly reversed its direction. Watching the upraised saber of the laplace for a signal, the hounsi reversed their direction again.

000 When the dance drama ended, the hounsi carried the flags back into

[1] [Note that the houngan and the laplace are performing services normally performed by the prêt savane. Cf. p. 351, Category 116. -- Analyst]

when the dance drama ended, the hounsi carried the flags back into
the hounfor. Then they sat on the ground while the houngan came for- 793
ward to the center post to make his ritual flour drawing. Holding the flour 794
in his hand, he allowed a little of it to trickle out in a fine white line. He 787
worked rapidly, with half-closed eyes, speaking *langage*. A complicated 789
white geometric pattern grew on the earth around the center post. Among 796
its intricate designs highly stylized phallic forms were discernible. When 532
the houngan had finished the drawing, he wrote the name of the loa
whom they were serving: Ogoun Badagry. Then the other houngans and
mambos came forward, one at a time, to add to the design. When the vèvè
was completed it covered virtually the entire dance court.

The laplace came from the hounfor with a bundle of brilliantly colored 793
beads. He stood by the houngan at the center post. One by one the hounsi 794
came before the houngan, dropped on their knees, and kissed the ground. 787
Around each hounsi's neck the houngan placed a string of beads. He raised 789
her, pirouetted her first to the right, then to the left. The pirouette was to 796
encourage possession by the loa.

From the hounfor the hounsi now brought herbs and vegetables for the [782]
sacrifice. Baskets and bottles were set out neatly on the ground, along with
bundles of sticks and the iron pots, or *zins*.

The dance was resumed in a single rotating line around the houngan and the ritual offerings. Two hounsi in the center of the circle built fires, one on each side of the court. Over the fires they set the ritual iron pots. They poured oil into the pots and began the preparation of ritual food balls, like dumplings, from the ingredients at hand. One by one they dropped the dumplings into the oil, which was soon boiling.

The drumming, singing, and dancing were sustained at a high tension. A second team of drummers took over without a break in the music. The dancers now were almost exhausted. With a quick motion, the houngan spilled some rum into one of the boiling pots. A blue alcohol flame shot high into the air. Some of the hounsi screamed but continued to dance. Three of them fell to the ground, their limbs jerking uncontrollably. The loa had entered. Two of the "mounted" hounsi arose and continued to dance, staggering and jerking across the dance court. The third had to be lifted and carried into the hounfor.

The man who was to undergo initiation was waiting in the *djévo,* a special room in the hounfor. For the past seven days he had lain on a mat in the djévo, in virtual isolation except for visits from the houngan and the laplace.

Now the kanzo initiate was brought out, completely covered with a white cloth. Only his hands and feet could be seen. With one hand on the shoulder of the laplace, who preceded him, he moved with the dancers

794 787 789 796 793 in a circle around the two boiling pots. On the seventh circuit of the course, the laplace stopped him at the first pot. The houngan grasped the man's free hand and, bending down, dipped it into the boiling oil. There was no visible indication of pain. They moved to the second pot, and the man's hand was dipped again. They proceeded again to the first pot, where the dipping was repeated, then back again to the second pot. The neophyte's hand entered the boiling oil seven times in all. He made no sound, showed no resistance, no reflexes. Then the hounsi took him back to the hounfor. It was all over. After three days of isolation, they said, he would be kanzo.

The houngan peeled an orange, while everyone crowded close to watch. In it he found a two-gourde note. He peeled another orange and found in it a slip of paper with the name of a woman on it. She came forward, and everyone laughed. She was an old woman, the oldest of the hounsi. The houngan held the two-gourde note between his teeth. The old woman took the other end of the note in her teeth, but she had to kiss the houngan before he would let go.

796 794 171 The ritual of brulé zin, or kanzo, is of unmistakable West African origin. Herskovits has described a ceremony in Dahomey which in many details could easily have taken place in Haiti. The Dahomean rite was in honor of the gods of the Thunder pantheon. Here, too, we find a pot of boiling palm oil, in which are the sacred dumplings: "When the fire had finally subsided and only a faint column of smoke issued from the pot, the initiate came dancing toward it, thrust her hand into the boiling oil, and lifted out a dumpling. . . ."[2]

FAMILY RITES AT LÉOGANE

769 796 787 778 These services for family ancestors took place in the mountains above Léogane at the ancestral home of my friend Libera Borderau. They were conducted on the grounds of his grandmother's house. The ritual began with dancing. Against the wall of the house sat the three drummers with their Arada drums. Near them, leaning against the wall, were the flags of the family loa. Also near by was a long high table serving as a makeshift altar called the *pé*. In the very center of the table in a clean white dish lay eight loa stones—old Carib artifacts. The stones were identical in shape, all of them perfectly symmetrical, resembling small, pointed cigars. In the *pierre-loas* lived the family deities, and much of the ceremony was built around them. The stones had been bathed and polished in oil for the occasion. Set around the plate of stones were numerous small *criches* (French, *cruches*—clay water jugs), glass bottles, and earthenware jars which also contained loa. On the low bench before the table, seven dishes

[2] [HERSKOVITS, Dahomey, II, 165. Cf. P 351, Cat. 116.--Analyst]

were set out in a row, and before them four *couis*, the half-gourd bowls 769
used in services to the marassas, the twin spirits. 796

In the house, at the center of the floor, was a round flat stone about ten 787
inches in diameter and about two inches thick, resembling a millstone. 778
This was the *pierre-manman*, the mother stone responsible for the coming of the other loa stones and who cared for them in the absence of the family. In this stone, they said, was the spirit of the old loa Nananbouclou. On a mat in the corner of the room two children slept.

Outside, on a chair, his back against the wall of the house, the houngan 769
sat, his rattle and bell in hand. He had come several miles to conduct the 796
service. Most of those who danced were his own hounsi. The houngan 787
was "strong" and well known in the region; people said he had worked 793
for high government officials, including the president himself.

After several rounds of Arada dancing in which children as well as 769
adults took part, the drums stopped. The houngan and his laplace moved 796
up to the building which served for the night as the hounfor. It was up a 794
steep slope, about a hundred feet from the dance court. There they pre- 787
pared for the sacrifice to Chébo Profiel, the honored loa of the evening. Passing in and out among the spectators was a woman who would be possessed by Papa Chébo; since he was the guest of the service, she (or the loa in her head) was free to come and go as she chose, to speak as she pleased, and to do what she wished. Mostly she shook hands with people, a ceremony which continued throughout the night. First she would offer the right hand, then the left; or perhaps both at once, in which case the hands would be shaken downward vigorously three or four times. Someone ignorantly said, "Bon soir, Madame!" and she turned on him to reprimand his insolence. She was not "Madame," she was *l'Autorité*, the Authority.

During the course of the evening the conviction became stronger and stronger in her that she was Chébo Profiel. From the time we first saw her until the end of the evening her personality underwent marked changes. She "became" Papa Chébo.

The houngan sat before a small hole, possibly a foot deep and ten inches 782
in diameter, in front of the hounfor. The fresh earth was piled neatly to 793
the side, and an enameled plate was set on top of it. Around the hole were 796
the various dishes to be offered to Chébo Profiel. The laplace prayed in 787
Latin, a short Catholic service. Then the houngan, shaking his beaded 769
rattle and tinkling his bell, called for Chébo to "enter." He made a small
maize-flour drawing around the hole, and then began the feeding of the (532)
loa. The plates arranged for the feast contained roasted maize, roasted peanuts, bread, cassava, rice, and other foods. There were bottles of rum,

793 796 782 787 769

kola (a soft drink), *clairin*, and syrup. The houngan, entreating Chébo to accept, poured a little *clairin* into the hole. The loa seemed to accept, for the *clairin* was quickly absorbed in the ground. The houngan took rice from the plate with his fingers, about the amount he might place in his own mouth, and put it gently into the hole. He was feeding Papa Chébo, literally placing the food in his mouth. After the rice, which was dry, the houngan poured in a little more *clairin* to moisten it. He ordered the laplace to break up the bread, and then he placed a small piece in the hole and washed it down with a little rum. The houngan seemed to understand that Papa Chébo Profiel was hungry, and that he was also an epicure. He allowed him to taste the roasted corn, and then washed it down with a trickle of kola. Then he gave him a taste of the roasted peanuts, and another morsel of bread. Once Chébo got his mouth too full in his zest for the meal, and the assemblage had to wait for him to finish "coughing." Then the houngan gave him a long drink of kola to clear his windpipe. After that the houngan was more careful in the way he fed him—a little cassava, a drink, a little bread. As the houngan fed the loa, some of the spectators reached over and placed small coins in the empty dish by the hole. These too were for Chébo. Finally, Chébo was through eating. The food was gone.

769 794 787 796 [793] [534]

The houngan, shaking his rattle and his bell, blew two sharp notes on his whistle. At the door of the hounfor appeared l'Autorité, the hounsi possessed by Papa Chébo. More than ever she resembled the loa, and less than ever she resembled herself. In one hand she held a saber. Her bodily movements were spasmodic, as though she was being forced to do things to which she was not accustomed. She moved slowly into the circle, her eyes almost closed; she leaned backward, then twisted grotesquely around, jerked this way and that, buffeted by the loa. Suddenly she began to whirl. [793] The houngan called "Tambouyé!" and the drummers beat a slow complicated rhythm, a salute to Chébo. The loa had really "entered" now. There was no mistaking the jerky, irresponsible movements of the hounsi's head and shoulders. She leaned backward as though about to fall, incredibly kept her balance, rolled forward as though she were going to plunge to the ground, and twisted herself upright once more. The saber passed close to the faces of the spectators, even scratched some of them and cut their clothing. Her movements had a definitely masculine character. Chébo Profiel was a man.

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She reached over to seize a chicken that was held out to her. Grasping its legs with her free hand, she continued her spinning, twisting, lurching dance. Then she cradled the chicken, rocking it back and forth until it was in a hypnotic trance. She placed it on the ground before a tiny pile

of ground maize prepared by the laplace. The chicken, released, sat mo- 782
tionless, making no effort to escape. All watched attentively, the houngan 787
shaking his rattle and bell. Suddenly the chicken cocked its head and, 769
seeming to see the corn for the first time, reached out and pecked at it. 794
This was the loa receiving the sacrifice—a difficult conception if one thinks 796
of the chicken itself as the sacrifice. "Chébo," l'Autorité, snatched the chicken up, danced violently about, the loa in full possession of her body. With a swift movement of the saber, she cut the chicken's throat and caused the first drop of blood to fall into the hole. When the chicken stopped struggling, it was left there, head downward. L'Autorité took up a cock which was given her, cradled him, and set him before the ground maize. When he pecked at it, she picked him up and danced, around and around, jerking, lunging, never quite falling. She took his comb between her teeth, supporting his body gently with her hands, and spun around and around. Then she released him, cut his throat, and placed him in the hole with the chicken.

At the side of the hounfor, waiting, was a goat (called by the ritual name Dogwé). He had a fine silky white coat and a long beard. He was brought in to the place of sacrifice, and l'Autorité dropped to her knees to embrace his neck with her arms. She remained there a moment, her cheek against his, talking to him. Then she arose, a machete in hand instead of a saber, and began to pirouette while three men threw the goat on his side. Then she cut with the machete, and the goat's blood, too, began to run into the hole. For the first time her dance became unquestionably frenzied. She swung strong, full blows of the machete at the goat's neck, finally severing the head. From the hindquarters she cut a piece of red meat and placed it in her mouth.

At a signal from the houngan, three men carried the goat's body away to be dressed and cooked, and a woman came forward to wipe the blood from Papa Chébo's face.

The drums began again, a Dahomé dance, and the people relaxed. Many [535]
joined in the dancing while l'Autorité strutted about shaking hands and talking *langage*. She also danced, with gestures and movements wholly masculine. At one point she briefly advanced on another woman, making sexual gestures.

The houngan and his houngénicon retired to the front room of the hut. 769
A new mat had been placed there for the houngénicon. She lay down on it, 793
and the houngan sat in a chair against the wall. This was the beginning 794
of the ceremony of calling *les morts en bas dleau* (the dead below the 796
water).

Meanwhile, before the hounfor, the laplace and a hounsi were building [346]

769 the *card*, a hogan-like structure made of bent saplings covered with cotton
793 cloth.

794 Rain had been threatening all evening, and now it began. Some people
796 crowded into the hut where the goat was being barbecued. Others came
[346) into the hut where the houngénicon lay; in the back room, with the pé, Chêbo, l'Autorité, strutted and shook hands with the visitors. The straw roof leaked a little, but no one minded very much. The houngan and his houngénicon, who had been under a strain, relaxed. The rain would mark the length of the intermission. Except for the sound of the rain and "Chêbo's" *langage*, there was no noise. No one spoke. Then the houngan,
769 his eyes closed, began to sing an Ibo song.

793 Ibo Lazile oh, éya!
796 Grand gout manqué tuyé moin!
539 A la yun an six mois m' sous la mer,
Grand gout manqué tuyé moin!

Ibo Lazile, oh, éya!
Hunger has not killed me!
One year and six months I have been under the sea,
Hunger has not killed me!

The others sang responsively:

Ibo Lazile, oh, Ibo!
Ibo grand gout pas tuyé'm, Ibo!

Ibo Lazile, oh, Ibo!
Ibo, hunger has not killed me, Ibo!

After a while the houngan called "Abobo!"—which was the signal to conclude. The rain was still coming down, and he called "Abobo!" for the rain to cease also. But it did not stop, and everyone laughed. He began another song, also Ibo:

Ianman Ibo lélé!
Ianman Ibo lélé!
Pilet pied'm mandé pardon,
Ça pardon wa fai pou moin?
Ça ou gainyan con ça? [Ex. 80]

Ianman Ibo lélé!
Ianman Ibo lélé!
Step on my foot and ask my pardon,
What will the pardon do for me?
What do you have [what are you doing] like that?

And the others came in, spiritedly:

Ianman, oh, un hunh!
Ianman, con ça'm dansé Ibo!
Ianman, oh, un hunh!

Ianman, oh, un hunh!
Ianman, like this I dance, Ibo!
Ianman, oh, un hunh!

While those in the front room were singing, l'Autorité, in the inner 764 room, was suddenly thrown about violently by her possession. She raced 794 into one wall of the hut, striking her head, flung herself back against the 796 opposite wall, kicking, trembling, calling out strange *langage*. She crashed 787 into the pé, upsetting the dishes, and then fell across the mat where the children were lying half asleep. One of them, a boy of about four, became hysterical. He knew the woman, but he had never seen her like this. His mother carried him to the front room, where she finally quieted his crying. L'Autorité, spent for the moment, lay across the mat. No one touched her. Later, when the singing was resumed, she got to her feet and made the rounds once more, shaking hands again and again. She was now smoking a pipe.

When the houngan heard the rain subsiding, he again called out [793] "Abobo!" as though he were giving the order to cease, and everyone, himself included, laughed again. When it had definitely stopped, someone went out to shake the water from the canopy. The drums were brought out of their shelter, and although the ground was sticky with mud, the dancing was resumed. The houngan asked for a fast Nago dance, and the front room of the hut was once more emptied of everyone except the houngan and his houngénicon.

The laplace and his assistant went up the hill to put the finishing touches 769 to the *card*, the temporary structure in which the houngan was going to 793 receive the loa and the dead. From a small chest of chinaware, the houn- 794 génicon set a "table" for the loa on the ground where she sat. The sacrifice 796 had been for a single loa, Chêbo; the rest of the service was for all the loa 787 served by the family. The houngan, sitting next to the houngénicon, 346] sounded his rattle and spoke *langage*. He sang quietly, a song which only the houngénicon could hear, watching her intently. A large basket of dishes, bottles, and various other paraphernalia was brought by a hounsi. Candles were lighted and set on the ground. The houngan gave a signal, and the hounsi brought a large square of white cotton cloth, which they stretched tight over the houngénicon like a canopy. The candle flame and the silhouette of the houngénicon could be seen through the cloth, but the details of the service were not visible. Sometimes, the houngan, his bell and rattle in hand, would go under the cloth to assist in the calling of the loa. Then, without warning, things began to happen very rapidly.

One of the hounsi who sat before the door began to quiver and make strange noises in her throat: "Ka, ka, k-k-k-k-k-k-a!" Her body shook violently, and her head rolled on her shoulders. Almost simultaneously something began to happen under the cloth where the houngénicon was, and the members of the family crowded up to the *card* by the houmfor. The houngénicon lay stiffly, her eyes closed, the white cloth removed. The

769 houngan carried out the large round basket in which lay the bottles and
793 the pierre-loas. The hounsi gathered around it, ten of them, to carry it to
794 the *card*. In the bottles were *les morts en bas dlean* (the spirits of the dead
● 796 from below the water). Carrying the flags, three hounsi danced, singing,
789 up to the *card*. After them the laplace came, carrying in his left hand a
plate of maize flour from which he made vèvès in the line of advance, simple marks symbolizing the crossroads. The drums were beating a special
salute to the loa. The ten hounsi carrying the basket danced and sang. As
[535] they moved up the hill, they rotated, so that the basket revolved like the
hub of a wheel. Their progress was not smooth, however; they jerked forward and backward as they rotated. Arriving before the *card*, first one,
then a second, was entered by her loa. They fell, jerked, and stumbled.
This was all a very good omen. The houngan called "Abobo!" for them
to resist such possession, and the hounsi all sat down on the ground. The
houngan placed the basket inside the *card* and entered after it. He called
for his little bell, which the laplace passed in to him. The laplace closed
the flap down tight, from the outside, and placed the flags against it.

[539] Upon a signal given from within, the hounsi began a song:

La famille semblé,
Oh semblé nous!
La famille semblé,
Oh nous semblé pou nou pa'lé parole nous là!
La famille semblé!

The family gathers,
Oh, we gather!
The family gathers,
Oh, we gather to speak our words here!
The family gathers!

769 The laplace took his position, his back to the *card*, while inside, because
796 of the candle burning there, the houngan could be seen setting out the
789 contents of the basket. The candle went out, and in the *card* the little bell
[794] began to tinkle. The singing stopped. The houngan was beginning to
[793] talk to the dead below the water. First he talked *langage*. Then his voice
was heard through the constant sound of the tiny bell, supplicating Papa
Loko to talk a little bit with his "children." A faint, tremulous voice, that
of a tired old grandfather, was heard to answer. Papa Loko was stirring
himself out of a long silence. He talked a long while to the houngan.
Sometimes they both spoke at once. Faintly he was heard to say that he
had come a long way to see his children, and that he was very tired. But
as he talked his strength returned to him, and, asking the houngan to
wait, he spoke directly [illegible] his "children," who sat, respectfully and awed,

around the *card*. Here everyone participated. This was why they had 769
come. Benevolently Papa Loko greeted them: "Bonjou, ti moune moin 796
yo, c'est Papa Loko" (Good day, all my children, this is Papa Loko). To- 787
gether they all answered eagerly: "Bon soir, Papa!" "Bon soir, Grand!" "Bon soir, cher Papa!" "Bon soir, cher Loko!" Papa Loko told them about his journey, and persons long dead whom he had seen below the water, and he passed on the news from the island below the sea. Then he began to address them singly, asking questions, giving news of dead relatives, and showing a vital interest in the problems of his "children." They answered him. "Oui, Papa," and "Non, Papa Loko," and took deeply to heart anything he said, whether praise or criticism:

[539]

Bon jour, Télisman!	Good day, Télisman!
Bon soir, Papa!	Good evening, Papa!
Comment nou yé, Télisman?	How are you, Télisman?
Tout bien, Papa Loko!	Everything is fine, Papa Loko!
C'est ou même qui travaille très dûr?	Are you one who works very hard?
Oui, Papa, moin travaille en pile.	Yes, Papa, I work a great deal.
Ou travaille pou' vié maman ou?	You care for your old mother?
Oui, Papa.	Yes, Papa.
Télisman, pitit moin, faut ou planté jardin ou encore. Graine, li pas bon.	Télisman, my child, you will have to plant your garden again. The seeds you planted are no good.
Merci, cher Loko!	Thank you, dear Loko!
Ou pas blié'm, Télisman.	You do not forget me, Télisman.
Non, cher Loko.	No, dear Loko.
Yo dit ou paraillé travaille en ville.	They say you are going to work in the city.
Lé'm capab', Papa.	When I can, Papa.
Pas blié moune morne ça yo, Télisman.	Do not forget the people of the hills, Télisman.
Non, cher Loko, m' pas blié yo.	No, dear Loko, I will not forget them.
Papa ou dit'm ba ou bon soir pou'li.	Your father asked me to say good evening to you for him.
Merci, Papa.	Thank you, Papa.
Papa Loko fini pa'lé ou, Télisman.	Papa Loko is through talking to you, Télisman.
Merci, Papa.	Thank you, Papa.
Changé 'm, Télisman.	Remember me, Télisman.

Papa Loko talked in turn to everyone in the family who was present, and inquired, sometimes suspiciously, after those who were absent. After many minutes, Papa Loko said regretfully that he had to go away, and bade them au revoir. They were all sorry he was leaving, because he was well loved. He spoke a few words with the houngan, and then his voice faded away. Only the tinkling of the little bell remained.

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987
Then, faintly, came the broken voice of an old woman who was crying. The houngan said her children were waiting to see her, and asked her to enter. Moyise had been dead many generations already, but she was still crying over the circumstances of her death, and because she had left her children behind her. The houngan, speaking gently, asked her to try to stop crying because her children were waiting. Little by little she controlled herself. She greeted them all and talked with each member of the family in turn. She showed a special interest in the women and children and was concerned about family problems.

After Moyise went away, Docile, Moyise' daughter, came. She greeted them all and then complained that when she had died she had been buried in a grave near that of a thief; now she wished for her body to be moved. Aline, on whose place the grave was situated, promised to take care of the matter, and Docile became placated. Her voice faded away. Inside the *card*, the houngan talked *langage* and rang his bell.

After Docile came Joseph and his son Jougleau. Joseph and Jougleau timed their entrance badly and came in together, both talking at once. The houngan tried to straighten out the situation, and for a moment the three of them were conversing simultaneously. Then Jougleau withdrew and returned when his father was through. After Jougleau came still later generations, represented by Ti Perci and her children, Na and Bernicia. Bernicia came crying bitterly about something. The houngan asked her to stop, because he could not bear to hear women crying. Everyone laughed, and Bernicia controlled herself.

[776] Then Damballa Wèdo, the ancient loa, came, speaking with an aged and broken voice. Feebly he sang his song in "African" language:

[539]
Ago! Damballa Wèdo!
Oh Damballa Wèdo kian kian!
Oh Damballa Wèdo kian kian!
Oh ha ha ha Damballa Wèdo kian kian!
Oh Damballa Wèdo kian kian! [Ex. 39]

[776] Later, Damballa sang again, calling on Legba to act as witness to his words:

[539]
Ago-é Attibon Legba oh é!
Oh Damballa Wèdo é kélé manyan!
Oh gainyain jou' ya changé main là kélé manyan!
Oh Damballa Wèdo é kélé manyan!
Oh Ayida Wèdo é kélé manyan!
Oh gainyain jou' pou' changé main là kélé manyan! [Ex. 40]

Ago-é Attibon Legba oh é!
Oh, Damballa Wèdo *é, kélé manyan!*

Oh, a day will come when they will remember me here, *kélé manyan!* 796
Oh, Damballa Wèdo *é*, *kélé manyan.* 789
Oh, Ayida Wèdo *é*, *kélé manyan!* 787
Oh, a day will come for you to remember me here, *kélé manyan!* [539]

During the evening about twenty loa and ancestors came into the *caye* [776] to talk. When the last had finished speaking the hills were already light, and the service was over.

Service for Èzilie Fréda and St. Jacques Majeur

This service took place not in the open but under a tonnelle surrounded 796 by four walls, adjoining the hounfor of Alexis Stephan on the west fringes 776 of Port-au-Prince. Separate from the hounfor and dance court was a 346 shrine to the "dead" loa Gèdé Nimbo. The shrine was a small shed open on one side. Within, lighted by flickering oil lamps, was a life-size effigy [532] of Gèdé, a scarecrow-like figure dressed in the loa's traditional attire— [364] black tail coat and trousers, and a tall opera hat. On the otherwise blank face of the figure were smoked glasses with white rims.

The dancing was progressing under the supervision of the houngan's 796 adjutant, the laplace. He wandered among the drummers and dancers, [794] encouraged the singing, and issued orders here and there. No one seemed to take him very seriously. There was a good deal of joking, and the [522] gathering seemed very much like an old-fashioned family reunion. There were perhaps a hundred dancers and spectators—friends, relatives, and devotees of Stephan's hounfor. Everyone was watching with affection an old woman who could not be restrained from dancing. She executed old classical steps and postures with a skill that called for running comment all around her. As each piece came to an end someone would step up to her and say something like: "Woy, Manman, mais ou passé mwê!" (Oh, Mother, you are better than me!). Then they would attempt to get her to sit down again, but she would only shake them off and urge the drummers to get going if they were not too tired.

Eventually, the houngan, Stephan, made a casual entrance through the [793] door of his adjoining hounfor. He held the usual ritual rattle and bell in [534] his hand, and sauntered around to chat with his friends.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, the dancing became more serious. 796 Soon, only the hounsi, the female servitors, were dancing. The drums 776 played a salute to Legba, the first loa to be called upon in a Vodoun serv- [794] ice. For it is Legba who opens all gates and all highways, and who paves the way for communication with other deities. Though he is not the greatest of the loa, he is one of the most ancient. The houngan spilled water on [782] the ground as a libation, and the dancing continued.

796 793 [554] [202] Then a well-dressed young man entered, and the drummers swiftly changed to the salute reserved for guests of distinction. The hounsi sang, "Président passe là, l'ap monté au gouvernment!" and waved paper flags and kerchiefs. The young man was a distant relative of Stephan's; he also was a houngan.

After a while Stephan brought from his hounfor a second asson, or ritual rattle, and another small hand bell, both of which he handed to the [576] young man. He was extending the courtesy of his hounfor, sharing his instruments of authority and religious power with his fellow houngan. Then followed an exhibition between the two houngans that was half duel and half ballet. They stood face to face, each of them holding the asson in one hand and the tiny bell in the other. Stephan was "testing" the young houngan for the edification of all present. Each tiny move made by Stephan was duplicated simultaneously by his guest, as though he were a mirrored reflection.

Every posture Stephan made was duplicated instantly by his guest. The assons and the bells were agitated constantly. The rattle in the young man's hand did precisely what Stephan's did. The two men looked into each other's eyes with intensity, as though this bound their movements together and unified them. When Stephan twisted to the left, the other houngan twisted to the right. Every contortion of the young man was an exact replica of Stephan's movements. The two assons rattled out the same rhythms and the same signals; so did the bells. The backdrop for this "test" was provided by the drummers. The faces of the two men broke into a sweat from the intense nervous effort. At last it came to an end. A woman came forward and wiped their faces with a colored kerchief. The "testing" ceremony was over. The visiting houngan had been proved.

796 793 787 [532] [794] [776] Stephan then made a ritual vèvè, or maize-flour ritual drawing on the ground. Afterward there was more singing and dancing by the hounsi. They sang several songs for Ezilie Fréda, the "pure" loa. And Alexis Stephan went into a trance. It was unexpected. The servitors had not prepared for it. In this emergency the visiting houngan took over. He seemed a little anxious. He was unfamiliar with the particular psychological factors at play in this particular hounfor. He was not certain of the character of Stephan's possession. But he took over grimly. The houngénicon, an older woman, stepped forward to help. While the young houngan wielded the asson and bell, the woman issued instructions. Stephan, his head hanging back, his eyes closed, was supported by two of the hounsi. Other servitors hurriedly brought out a white sheet and spread it on the ground. A chair and a table were set upon the sheet, and Stephan was placed in the chair, where he now sat with his head hanging limply on his chest.

Stephan had been mounted by Ezilie Fréda, the deity of whiteness and 796
purity. That was why he was protected from the earth by the white sheet 787
beneath him. While the drums continued to beat, the hounsi placed upon 793
the table a bottle of wine, a clean glass, and a white plate with boiled maize [794
meal, topped by a whole egg. Then they held over Stephan—who had be- 776]
come, for the time being, Ezilie—a second white sheet. The possessed houngan began to bend forward and back with great rapidity, toward the surface of the table and back to an upright position, his arms hanging quietly downward. The hounsi fluttered the covering sheet in such a way that the spectators could not see what was going on beneath it. In less than a minute, Stephan's movements ceased. The sheet was removed. Stephan sat limply, talking *langage*. In the white dish only the broken shells of the egg and a small portion of the meal remained. Some of the wine was gone from the upright bottle. The glass still had a little wine in the bottom. Ezilie had accepted the sacrifice. Not once had Stephan's hands changed from their hanging position or approached the table. The eggshells themselves were clean, but a tiny trickle of liquid yolk ran from the corner of Stephan's mouth. The visiting houngan rattled his asson before Stephan, who arose wearily, with the help of the hounsi, and followed him through the door into the hounfor.

Again there was dancing, and a little while later Stephan emerged from the hounfor in a bizarre military costume of red velvet, wearing black glasses, a blue military cap with a red feather, and a sword. He was almost as weird as the effigy of Gèdé that stood outside. The houngan had now become St. Jacques Majeur, or Ogoun, the loa of war and the forge. His personality had undergone a dramatic change. Strictly speaking, Stephan was not in a trance as he had been a little earlier. He was in control of his movements, which were completely conscious, and yet he was certainly not in a "normal" state of mind. Previously Stephan had been in a state of possession; now, one might say, he was in a state of obsession. He had identified himself with St. Jacques. He strode and swaggered like St. Jacques. His bearing was regal, military, and awesome. His costume should have seemed funny, like similar costumes seen during Mardi Gras days, but instead it was unworldly and impressive.

He carried a rum bottle in his hand, and he moved through the gathering making people drink from it. Those who drank from the bottle were sharing with St. Jacques. Stephan poured more rum into an iron pot on the ground and set it afire. The hounsi kanzo, the servitors of the higher [794]
order who had been through the fire ordeal, came forward and washed their hands and arms with the burning rum, so that at times their whole arms were aflame, until they quickly snuffed the fire out. Some of the hounsi brought their children forward and washed their arms in the burn-

● 796 787 793 [794] ing rum also, as a foretaste of the kanzo rites they might one day go through.

There was dancing again for others besides the hounsi. The tension had passed. The ceremony was over, and the rest of the night was simply for pleasure.

776 GÈDÉ NIMBO, THE "DEAD" LOA

Gèdé Nimbo, also known as Baron Samedi, is one of the most powerful deities of the Haitian pantheon. He guards the cemetery and protects the graves, especially those of children. But Gèdé Nimbo is not simply another loa, he is a personification of death. Like death, he is given to whim. He is an intruder. He forces his way into services being held for other deities, behaves badly, and has to be wheedled to depart. He indulges in ribald humor when the mood strikes him, and the most solemn occasions are likely to be disturbed by his pranks. Gèdé Nimbo can be formidable when aroused, as he can be gentle and forbearing when it suits him.

Gèdé is always dressed in black, usually with a tail coat and top hat. He is always represented in this attire in the shrines where effigies of him are to be found. Elsie Clews Parsons, a number of years ago, reported this Haitian description of Gèdé:

> He is a *grande diable*. He makes all kinds of motions to make you laugh, but you must not laugh at him, for if you do he makes you "stop laughing" . . . Anything you touch, he takes and never returns, and you have to give him more and more. He smokes cigarettes, not cigars. He wears a coat and a hat, and carries a stick. He can make himself short or . . . as tall as a mast.[3]

The kind of motions Gèdé makes would in certain other cultures be regarded as obscenities. In Haiti they are merely public violations of social restraints and taboos, things no Haitian would think of doing in public view. But Gèdé, the loa of the graveyard, has special prerogatives. He does not fear criticism. He flouts propriety at will, he embarrasses, provokes, and insults with impunity.

776 787 796 At a Nago ceremony which I witnessed near Port-au-Prince, the stronghold of the Gèdé cult, Gèdé Nimbo entered with such gusto that he virtually made a shambles of the service. The first person to be mounted by the loa was the laplace, the houngan's understudy. He stiffened, twisted, jerked, and thrashed about. As the more violent phase of his possession wore off, he began to make lascivious loin movements, as though copulating with the center post. Afterward, he moved about, shaking hands and greeting various persons with insulting remarks calculated to make others laugh at the indignities. Stopping before a distinguished-looking spectator, Gèdé made a few loin movements in his direction. Grasping another man by the hands, he greeted him vigorously and inquired whether it was

[3] [Parsons, Spirit Cult in Hayti. Cf. p. 351, Cat. 16.--Analyst]

his *zozo* (penis) to which his glasses were affixed. As the dance progressed, the possessions came rapidly. The possessed persons, men and women alike, leaped about the tonnelle, mimicking copulation. They broke drinking glasses on the ground, threw themselves upon the drummers, and careened and crashed into spectators and dancers. In the course of the service there were nearly twenty possessions—all of them noteworthy for their portrayal of Gèdé Nimbo as a loa who has contempt for proprieties. For he is the spirit of the cemetery, the one who laughs last and best. 776 787 796 ●

Near the mountain town of Kenskoff I saw another service for Gèdé, which showed a different aspect of the loa of the graveyard. It took place inside the hut of a rural houngan, who was conducting the affair for his own immediate family and a few close friends. The hut itself was small. Its single room had been partitioned into two by hanging a sheet in the middle. On one side of the sheet a young child was lying on a mat next to the carefully stored Arada drums. On the other side the ceremony was taking place. Great bouquets of red flowers were arranged in a corner; above them hung a colored lithograph of the Christ child; below, on the floor, was a crude oil lamp with a floating wick. The floor area was no more than seven feet square, but at least twelve persons were crowded there, and others clustered in the doorway. Ritual flags leaned against the wall, one of red silk with a gold fringe, another of white silk with blue polka dots. A tiny space remained in the center of the floor for the houngan, whose "possession" by Gèdé was the feature of the service. [793]

The houngan was dressed in a black stovepipe hat, a blue blouse with white polka dots, and a black skirt over black trousers. In his hand he carried a walking stick. He smoked a pipe constantly, a variation of the customary cigarette. In the tiny space in the center of the room, the houngan—or, more properly, Gèdé Nimbo—danced. The houngan's personality had changed—his voice, his postures, all his mannerisms. He spoke only through his nose, for that is the way Gèdé talks, as though he had a cleft palate. 776 787 796 793

He whirled around and around, singing and talking *langage* in turn. His family sang: [539]

Gèdé-vi yo wè ago-é!
Gèdé-vi yo wè!
Papa Gèdé c'est loa!

It is Gèdé-vi they see, *ago-é!* *
It is Gèdé-vi they see!
Papa Gèdé is a *loa!*

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* *Ago:* exclamatory, signifying "I am here."

776 He was the center of all eyes. Most of the time he danced alone, gyrating
787 recklessly. Sometimes he danced with his houngénicon. Those who
793 watched clapped hands and uttered sounds imitating drums, for drums
●796 were not being used in this service. The houngan carried the inevitable
clochette, or tiny hand bell.

When newcomers arrived, Gèdé greeted them by shaking both their hands downward, vigorously, three times. Then he wiped their faces with his kerchief, a ceremony which he repeated from time to time. He
[535] danced with each of them a kind of Jenvalo step, simple, restrained, and dignified. One of the visitors fell to his knees to converse with him.

The entire evening was built around the houngan's representation of Gèdé. Properly speaking, the houngan was not in a trance. He was in full possession of all his normal faculties and was conscious of the slightest inconveniences and disturbances. Several times the clay bowl of his pipe fell from the reed stem, scattering hot ashes on the ground, and each time he paused to allow the houngénicon to clear them away. Yet he was carried away by his certainty that he was Gèdé. The obvious conviction of those who watched seemed to fortify him in his role. As the evening wore on, he became more and more detached from his normal personality. His psychic condition was not that of one who had been "mounted" by a loa; it was, rather, a continuously progressive ecstasy.

776 Gèdé is, in fact, more than a loa of the cemetery; he is a personification
761 of death in all its macabre, humorous, and unpredictable aspects. Death is not merely a thing dying; it is an entity, a positive force in nature. Death is Gèdé Nimbo. I believe that when the houngan became Gèdé, all who had crowded into his hut felt themselves to be in the presence of death itself. Death, a dynamic, aggressive force, danced and pirouetted among them, talking the language of the dead and of old Africa.

776 Gèdé is often stern, austere, and forbidding, but he has other aspects. Haitians take amused pleasure at the terror he can strike into the hearts of the mighty. An old Gèdé song goes:

[539] Papa Gèdé bel ga'çon!	Papa Gèdé is a handsome fellow!
Papa Gèdé bel ga'çon!	Papa Gèdé is a handsome fellow!
L'habillé tout en noi'!	He is dressed all in black
Pou'l monté au palais!	For he is going up to the palace!
L'habillé tout en blanc	When he's dressed all in white
Li semblé yun deputé!	He looks like a deputy!
L'habillé tout en noi'!	When he's dressed all in black
Li semblé yun senateur!	He resembles a senator!

776 According to tradition, the song had its origin in a march on the capital
787 by some houngans many years ago. The story is very old and no one
793 remembers many of the details.
539

remembers many of the details. But during the administration of President 000
Louis Borno (1922–1930) there was a reënactment of the original march. 776
There suddenly appeared in the streets of Port-au-Prince a crowd of Gèdé 788
mystères—houngans "possessed" by Gèdé Nimbo and attired in Gèdé 643
dress: tall black hats, long black tail coats, smoked glasses, black skirts 175
over their black trousers. They carried flags, waved polka-dot kerchiefs, shook their ceremonial rattles, and paused sometimes to wipe the perspiration from one another's faces. They became the nucleus of a huge, noisy crowd moving up the hill toward the palace. Market women followed instead of going home; street gamins screamed and raced among them. Before they had arrived at the palace grounds they had taken on the semblance of a huge Mardi Gras band. They swerved through the gates of the palace grounds and along the drive, right to the steps of the palace itself. The guards, taken by surprise, waited helplessly for their officers to arrive.

At the palace door, the houngans demanded money from the president. Borno was in a dilemma. He was reputed to be sympathetic to Vodoun ritual but was only surreptitiously so. He feared the houngans, and he feared public opinion. What would the upper class of Port-au-Prince think, the Latin-culture Haitians? With Gèdé's worst manners, the Gèdé mystères cavorted on the palace steps. Finally Borno gave in. He sent the money out to them, and then the crowd of Gèdés marched out of the palace grounds, waving their flags and shaking their rattles.

SERVICE FOR THE HOUNSI BOSSALE

This ritual of calling the loa to speak through the mouth of the Vodoun 346
priest took place in the Bolosse section of Port-au-Prince. The hounfor was 796
situated in a congested slum area of the city, but the grounds around it 787
were spacious. The hounfor itself was small and unpretentious, and except for the adjoining tonnelle would easily have been mistaken for
another small wooden house. The houngan was a heavy-set man with a 793
black mustache. Quick to laugh and easy in his movements, he neverthe- 794
less commanded solemn respect from the hounsi and the other partici- 796
pants. His soft-spoken voice expressed assurance and authority. 787

There were a number of possessions in the course of the dancing, all more or less routine. Each time a possession occurred, the houngan came forward with his asson and bell, gave a pitcher of water and a candle to the possessed devotee, and conducted her through a ritual at the foot of the center post.

Later, one of the hounsi came and sat at the houngan's feet. She was not possessed but obviously was in a state of high tension. Other servitors brought from the hounfor a wooden washtub and set it on the ground

793 before the houngan. Staring into the tub, he shook his asson and called
794 upon a certain loa to enter. Then he placed a lighted candle upright in the
796 tub and watched it for a moment. The flame was suddenly snuffed out.
787 The houngan looked concerned. He removed the candle and called for another one. When he placed the new candle in the tub it remained burning. The houngan smiled. The loa had agreed to enter. The houngan and his chief assistant placed the tub upon the head of the waiting hounsi. She trembled violently as though she had received a shock, then leaped to her feet. The loa had mounted her and presumably was sitting in the tub on her head. She began to stagger back and forth across the dance court, while the drums beat a salute. The tub tottered dangerously but did not fall. The possessed hounsi then began to whirl. She stopped, and the tub continued to spin for a few seconds on her head. She twirled again in the opposite direction. Each time she stopped she waited for the tub to stop spinning. The twirling motion was accompanied by a constant jerking and lurching, as though she were about to lose her balance, but she never stumbled or fell. After perhaps five minutes of this violent "riding" by the loa, the houngan approached her with his asson and conducted her into the hounfor, the tub still on her head. Inside the hounfor he removed the tub, sent the loa away, and left the hounsi to rest.

[346] There was more dancing, and after a while the service was transferred to a small temporary cloth-covered structure resembling an American Indian hogan. The hounsi bossale—the servitors whose loa had not been "tamed" or conditioned—lay before the structure on their faces, side by side. There were twelve of them. The other hounsi covered them completely with white sheets. The houngan entered the hogan-like structure (the *card*) with a candle and a bell. He tinkled his bell and began to call upon the loa to speak to the hounsi bossale. Through his mouth, first one spirit and then another made comments. The hounsi under the sheets were tensely quiet, until one of them began to jerk and scream. Several others, as though responding to a trigger, joined in the screaming. Older women came to quiet them. The hysterical reaction of the hounsi bossale was regarded as simply a reflection of their beginners' status. Their loa had not yet been controlled. The ritual continued until the early hours of the morning, the loa and ancient ancestors coming in to speak, one after another.

244
The First Yams and the First Rice

[796] [262] Each year, when the yams are harvested there is a great festival known as the *mangé yam*. Of all things grown in Haiti, the yam is perhaps the most significant. It is the most vital of all staples, and it is traditional. The yam

The yam

itself was transplanted from Africa, where in old times as well as in mod- 244
ern it was a staff of life among those who lived by agriculture. The word 171
"yam" is known throughout large parts of Africa, crossing language lines 192
and forests. It signifies the big root on which the African is so dependent, and it also has the general meaning of "eat." In Senegal it is called *nyami,* while across the width of Africa and in the upper Nile region it is called *nyam.*

In Haiti the yam is a tie with the past and a symbol of fertility. When 244
the yams are plentiful, there is food for the winter months and a sense of 769
well-being. When the yam crop is poor, there is insecurity and even hun- 182
ger. Whatever occurs, lurking in the background is the shadow of the family ancestors, for it is they who have the power to enhance the crops or blight them. This is the concept around which the mangé yam is built.

The annual harvest feast, on the twenty-fifth of November, is rooted in 244
the need for placating the ancestors, so that the dead will insure the fertil- 796
ity of the fields. Before the feast, no yams may be eaten, for the crop must 769
be "baptized" first. Should this rule be violated the yams will spoil and 184
those who eat them will become sick. The precise form of the mangé yam varies from region to region. Sometimes it is held on the premises of the cult chief for the community at large. More traditionally it is held on the family *habitation,* with a houngan in attendance. It is felt that an important obligation rests upon those who have wandered away from the homestead to return for the occasion. For the fate of the family depends to a large degree upon the successful appeal to the vast host of the ancestral dead, and the solidarity of the living in this effort is regarded as vital. Even if one belongs to a Christian sect which proscribes Vodoun, he is obligated and ready to come, for the welfare of the family is paramount. Catholics, Adventists, and Protestants alike participate. As the Haitians say, it is an affair for all who eat yams, and that means all Haitians.

Yams are washed and prepared for eating during the service. They are 244
cut in small portions, placed in dishes or calabash bowls, and offered to 796
the dead, who have prime rights. All categories of the dead are fed—those 769
who are remembered, those who can be recalled only by name, and those whose names are forgotten. The dead of Haiti are invoked, then the dead of Africa. The marassa dead are fed from separate gourds or bowls, and a special table is set for the ancient dead who move slowly because of their age or infirmities, and who may take a long while to arrive at the mangé. A share of the yams is offered to the family loa. Then the members of the family receive symbolic portions. There is singing, drumming, and dancing, and sometimes ritual baths are taken. Afterward, when the yam feast is ended, the crops may be gathered, stored, and eaten.

243 In the Artibonite Valley, where much rice is grown, a similar ceremony
796 takes place before the rice is gathered from the fields. In this ceremony it
769 is rice that is shared with the family ancestors, who have first rights, and
with close friends who have aided with the planting. This feast is called
[252] *mangé diri*, or sometimes *gouté diri*, the tasting of the rice. Small amounts
of rice are taken from the fields, cooked with red beans or Congo beans,
or perhaps made into dumplings. The farmer's friends and relatives gather
[524] while the food is still cooking, and play games such as *wari* and *trois-sept*.
[538] The children play *gage* games and sing songs, and sometimes a *malt' conte*—a storyteller—comes to entertain them.

When the food is finally ready, the family ancestors are given their share. The farmer takes a calabash bowl of the rice and walks around the house grounds calling upon his immediate ancestors to accept their share. He drops a little food on the ground for the remembered dead, for the unknown dead who preceded them, for the Haitian dead, and for the dead of Africa. He also drops small portions for the dead twins, the dead albinos, the deformed dead, and the dead who have lost limbs, and for the distressed dead who have been improperly buried, or who may not have received the feasts that were due them. Afterward, he offers food to those who died of drowning, or who were lost at sea and never heard of again.

Each course is shared with the ancestors. The farmer takes a pitcher of water, spilling a little here and a little there until the dead have quenched their thirst. He also gives a little of everything to the family loa. Then the calabashes are set out on a bench or table reserved for the dead, and this food is not disturbed. Food for the marassas is set out separately on the ground in three small *couis*, or gourd dishes.

The family ancestors whose good will has made the harvest possible
having been taken care of, the food is now shared among the extended
family and the friends who helped in the fields. Later there are prayers
[782] to the loa, the saints, and God, led by the houngan or a prêt' savane. To
[776] finish the affair, there may be Juba-type dances for the older people, while
[538] the children watch or play gage games.

[524] Only after this service are the farmer and his family and his *coumbite* (mutual labor group), if he belongs to one, free to go out and harvest the rice.[4]

243 These feasts of the rice and yam harvests are not of New World origin.
243 Similar harvest festivals for yams or rice are held over a wide area of West
796 Africa. There, as in Haiti, the fundamental concern is with the family
769 ancestors, whose good will must be constantly nourished so that the rains
171 continue to fall, the crops flourish, and human beings remain fertile.
Among the Ashanti of Ghana, for example, the yam and rice harvests are

[4] [Account given by Jean Ravel Pintro. Cf. P. 351, Category 116. -- Analyst]

celebrated with elaborate rituals for the dead. As in Haiti, great impor- 243
tance is laid on the presence of all living descendants, whose numbers are 244
calculated to influence the ancestors' behavior. And as in Haiti, the first 796
yams and the first rice are offered to the dead, and only after the family 769
ritual does the family divide the crop.[5] 171

SERVICE FOR THE ASSOTOR DRUM

The *assotor* drum is the largest and most sacred of all Haitian drums. 534
Around it is built an impressive and elaborate service known as the *mangé* 796
assotor, which, according to local traditions and circumstances, may be 778
held as often as every three years or as infrequently as every twenty-one years. The period between mangés always consists of an odd number of years. A houngan from Jérémie declared the service might properly be held every three, five, or seven years. Another cult priest in the Cul-de-Sac Plain said it could be held every seven, seventeen, or twenty-one years. The assotor is known as the *plus grand moune* (the most venerable "man") of the hounfor. However, few cult centers possess an assotor. "Assotor c'est fort bagaille, c'est pas zaffai tout moune" (The assotor is powerful, it isn't everybody's affair), Haitians say. This is what a man from Jérémie tells about it:

"The assotor is the greatest of all things in the hounfor. The Rada drums 534
are only for the Dahomey nation. The Congo drums are for the Congo 796
nation. The assotor is a man of Dahomey, but he is for all nations. It is 778
for all loa—Pétro, Congo, Bumba, Dahomey. The assotor belongs to 184
Dahomey, but when there is a great service the assotor is the host to the 787
loa of every rite, the loa of Haiti and of Africa. When the assotor is played, [776]
the loa are awakened everywhere. Loa who have been forgotten by the Creoles (Haitians) will come to the service and mount people, and when the loa have gone, many people don't know what loa has been riding them. Some ancient spirits from far away come only to the assotor service, and when it is over they aren't heard of again.

"The assotor drum is not for small things, it is for great occasions. For 534
some people there are no occasions in their whole lives great enough for 796
an assotor service. When all other things have failed, it is only then that 778
the assotor is called upon. 787

"If a big houngan should have an assotor drum, he can have only one, and it is the chief of the hounfor. All other drums are its servants. You can make an assotor, but it is not necessarily an assotor. It may look like an assotor and not be an assotor. To be an assotor it must not only have the shape of an assotor but it must be accepted by the loa. There was a houngan near Jérémie who made an assotor and held a great service with it,

[5] [Informant: Albert Kofi Prempeh, Ghana. Cf. p. 351, category 116. -- Analyst] [115]

534 but it wasn't a genuine assotor and the loa didn't come. The drummer beat
● 796 the assotor, but none of the loa came. As he played, the stick kept falling
778 out of his hand. This was a bad signal (omen). None of the people got
787 loa in their heads. The houngan was in a great sweat, but nothing happened. Another houngan came after the third day and told him to bring the service to an end. He did that. They threw the false assotor away and no one would touch it.

"To make an assotor, there is first a service. The houngan goes into the
534 woods to find a great tree that is suitable. The trunk must be big enough
796 so that the drum is at least as tall as a man. Most assotors are six feet high
778 or more. The houngan must buy the tree from Maît' Grand Bois, the loa
782 who is Master of the Forest. There is a service under the tree, a goat or a
787 bull is killed, and the houngan places money on the ground for Maît'
[776] Grand Bois. Then Maît' Grand Bois mounts his horses. He enters the head of the houngénicon or the laplace. Sometimes he rides the houngan himself. He is very rough with his horses. But if he accepts the money, the houngan has the tree cut down, and he has an assotor drum made. When the drum is finished, a special stick must be made to beat it. Again they go to the woods. They carry the great assotor drum with them. There is singing but no dancing or drumming. They find a tree from which they will cut the drumstick, and there is a service. The houngan must buy the branch from which the drumstick will be made. He offers money to Maît' Grand Bois, the same as before. He spills a little water on the ground for Maît' Grand Bois. He holds a candle in his hand. They sing to Maît' Grand Bois to let them have the stick. Maît' Grand Bois is the master of all the trees, but he is thinking also of the other loa and how they feel about it. On the Island Below the Water he consults with them. If he agrees to give the stick, he makes it known by mounting some of the hounsi, or the houngan, or maybe the man who will be the special assotor drummer. Then they cut down the branch and make the drumstick.

534 "The assotor drum is not dedicated to Ogoun or Ézilie or any other sin-
778 gle loa. If it is baptized, it is given its own name, Assotor. The spirit of
776 the assotor is multiple, for it is the *rappel* for all loa everywhere. The spirit of the assotor is called Assotor, and it is a kind of loa, but it is not one loa but all loa.

534 "In the assotor service, all loa come. Ogoun, Damballa, Legba, Tijean
796 Pétro, Dan Pétro, Gèdé, Maît' Cimitière, they all come. The big loa come
778 and the little loa, the chiefs and their escortes. Every big loa has an escorte
776 of twenty-one smaller loa. Some of the smaller loa have their own escortes. Damballa comes crawling like a snake. Makanda comes crawling like a snake. Ogoun comes fighting, chewing on nails or anything iron. Badé

comes quietly. Pié Cassé comes crawling because of his broken feet. Each 534
loa comes in his own way. 796

"First there is dancing for the Congo and Pétro loa. There is dancing for 778
the Kanga and Ibo nation. Last of all is Dahomé, for the assotor belongs 776
to the Dahomé nation, and Dahomé is the host. [184]

"The assotor service is the biggest of all services. It last fifteen days. Old [782]
people say that once there were services lasting more than twenty days. Every day, animals are killed—bulls, goats, pigs, chickens, turkeys—all according to the loa who are there to be fed. When Moundongue is fed, a dog's ears are clipped in his honor, because Moundongue is fond of dogs. More happens in the assotor mangé than all the rest of the year. Dahomé is host to the other nations, so the Rada service comes last. But the assotor drum is the host even to Dahomé, and it is fed last of all.

"The assotor drum is dressed in the finest of clothing and kerchiefs during the mangé. It is the king of everything.

"When the mangé assotor is ended, when the drum has been fed, there 534
is an immediate Mass held in church for the souls in purgatory. You don't 796
need to have any special reason, but you must hold the Mass for all the 769.
dead. You serve coffee, sandwiches, cake, and other refreshments for all the people.

"When there is no mangé going on, the assotor is kept in a special place 534
in the hounfor. Every seven or nine months the houngan has a special 778
rappel beaten for it on the Rada drums, and rum is spilled on the ground 796
for it. It is a great responsibility to own an assotor. But it does great things for the houngan who owns it."[6]

SERVICE FOR MAÎT' GRAND BOIS AT ANSE-À-VEAU

Orthodox tradition in the region of Anse-à-Veau places the loa Maît' 184
Grand Bois as the most potent and venerable of deities. He is the supreme 776
mystère, whose good will or eccentric whim determines the fortunes of all men. Somewhat subsidiary to Grand Bois, but served within the same rites, are two other non-Dahomé loa—Moundongue (of Congo origin) and Ibo. Older people of Anse-à-Veau regard this trilogy, along with Femme Grand Bois (the wife of Maît' Grand Bois), as the core of "Guinée" ritual. There is also a second group of deities, consisting primarily of Ogoun Feraille, Ézilie, and Fréda Dahomé; these loa are of the Dahomey family and are regarded as somewhat less important. Should services for any of them be held, they follow rites for the Grand Bois constellation. People in this region hold that there is only one Ibo loa, one Moundongue, one Ogoun, and one Ézilie, each of them with many names or manifestations. Legba, the Dahomean spirit of procreation,

[6] [For foot note, see Category 116, P. 351. --Analyst]

184 the gate, and the crossroads, is not regarded in the same light as the other 776 loa but as a messenger and interceder, and as the crossroads protector. He it is who helps in the placation of the major gods, and who guards people against accident, chance, and evil spirits on the highway.

● 796 In traditional form, services for Mait' Grand Bois and Femme Grand 788 Bois are conducted by the family without the aid of a houngan, under 776 the direction of the oldest male member of the family. The rites begin on a Thursday. With a tiny bell in his hand, the elder who directs the service (he is called ***grand famille***) calls upon Mait' Grand Bois to come and receive his feast. The procedures are solemn. The grand [789] famille and the family sing. At last Grand Bois enters the head of the old man who is conducting the rites. Then the sacrificial animals are brought forward and killed, and the women take the meat and begin the cooking of the mangé. While the food is cooking, the family sits and waits. Sometimes the grand famille begins a song, in which others join. The cooking takes a long while. Sometime during the night, when the food is ready, it is placed in two baskets—one for Mait' Grand Bois and one for his wife, Femme Grand Bois. Into each basket goes meat, corn meal, rice, bread, cookies, peanut cakes, cassava, and other delicacies. The two baskets are hung by ropes from the roof of the tonnelle, or from the branch of a tree. During the entire night, none of the family eats. Mâit' Grand Bois and his wife partake of the feast as they please. At six o'clock in the morning, the baskets are taken down, and the family is free to eat what the loa have left for them.

When the food is gone, the bones that are left are carried to a nearby stream and washed until they are white and shining. The bones are then placed in a large calabash bowl. Sweet-scented leaves from special trees are placed in the bowl with the bones, and water is added. The [783] mixture becomes a ritual lotion, or "bath." The entire family kneels before the liquid, which they rub on their faces, heads, arms, hands, legs, and feet. When the ritual bathing is over, they sing:

[539] *La famille vin' payé sang,*	The family comes to pay blood,
La famille vin' payé sang,	The family comes to pay blood,
Cérémonie là c'est fini! [Ex. 41]	The ceremony is finished!

Afterward, each member of the family places a small coin in the calabash dish with the bones and leaves, and the residue is then buried in a deep hole at a crossroads. A heavy post (***borne***) is erected at the site, with [211] markings to indicate the date of the service, and the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, each representing a year. Every year one of the numbers is checked off, and at the end of four years another service for Mait' Grand Bois and Femme Grand Bois is held.

If it should happen that on the appointed day four years later the 796 family is unable to hold the regular feast for Grand Bois, the grand 782 famille goes to the tree sacred to the loa, with a bottle of *tiro'* and other 776 token gifts. He explains the difficulties of the family; he tells the loa [778] that it has been a bad year, that the crops have been poor, and that the family has not been able to accumulate enough money to buy sacrificial animals. He asks Grand Bois for a six-month postponement. The loa [787] agrees to the postponement, making his intentions clear through various signs when the grand famille is possessed. "Grand Bois is a good loa," people say, "but if you fail to meet your obligations to him he will be very stern. If you don't keep your promise to him, he may seize you [i.e., kill you]."

When the rites for Mait' Grand Bois are finished, services for Ogoun and the Dahomé deities may be held, beginning on Friday and running through the week end. The Ogoun service is a festive affair. There is much singing and dancing, and early on Saturday morning the sacrificial bull is dressed and decorated with red and blue kerchiefs. Red and blue ribbons are tied to his horns, and he is led on a grand tour to various places, including Ogoun's tree. The drummers walk behind [787] him, and after them members of the family, some dancing, some singing, and some mounted by the loa Ogoun. The procession passes three times around the cemetery, then heads back toward the family *habitation*. When the participants reach the tree sacred to Legba, they sing to this loa, invoking him to "ouvri bayè pou' moin" (open the gate for me). Finally, when the procession reaches the *habitation*, the sacrificial bull is killed. After Ogoun has been served his mangé, the rites are terminated with an *action de grâce*.

Near Anse-à-Veau there is a dried-up spring. It is said that many (173 years ago during a big service for Mait' Grand Bois a man mounted by 796 this loa rushed to the foot of a large tree and began clawing at the 776 ground. He dug a hole there with his hands, and when it was only 782 a few feet deep, water began to flow. The members of the société later [787] enlarged the hole and lined it with stone. It was discovered that a giant crab was living in this water. One year, a service to Mait' Grand Bois was missed. The crab disappeared from the spring, and soon the water stopped flowing. "Grand Bois gives," the people say, "but if he is not remembered he also takes back."

Possession by the Loa Pinga Maza

On the outskirts of Port-au-Prince there is a hounfor dedicated to the 776 loa Pinga Maza, also known by the name Bakulu Baka. He is a ferocious [346] and fearsome spirit of the Pétro family who is known for his propensity

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772 of Haiti. But the route to it is through water. When the Haitians say
776 "under the water" they do not mean under the sea. The ocean is regarded
823 as the special domain of Agwé, La Sirène, and a few related deities, but it has nothing to do with most loa. "Under the water"
778 specifically means under the springs, the rivers, and the fresh-water lakes. Fresh water has the greatest of significance in relation to most of the Vodoun deities.

When a loa comes to visit his Haitian children he comes by way of the *chimin dleau* (the water road)—that is to say, by way of the river, the waterfall, or the spring. Because the spring is the primary source of fresh water, it is the most direct means of contact with the land of the loa. Tales are heard everywhere of persons who, drawing water from the spring at night, heard the voices of loa or the sound of singing and drumming coming up from somewhere below. And virtually all the tales about human beings who visited the land of the loa describe them as descending into a river or disappearing into a waterfall.

The loa are accustomed to traveling by the "water road." And in all aspects of the Vodoun service, this "water road" is refreshed and replenished. When the road is dry, contact with the loa is diminished. When it is moist, the loa travel easily.

776 Thus, the houngan constantly uses water to entice and invite the
782 deities. He holds a glass or pitcher of water at the center pole of his
823 peristyle. He extends it toward the four cardinal points. He spills
778 water at the foot of the center pole. He spills water in the hounfor at the foot of the *pé*, or altar. He sets a pitcher of water at the gateway of his *habitation*. And often, during a service, he pours a pathway of water in the dust from his gateway into his peristyle. Within nearly
[346] every *hounfor* there is at least one *bassin*, or pool, dedicated to the loa who is the *mait' caille*, the master of the house. These pools are carefully filled with water drawn from the springs. They are places of rest and refreshment for the deities whose names or portraits are inscribed on the walls above.

776 Sometimes rites and services are held at the site of the spring, the
782 houngan and his entourage marching down to it from the hounfor for
823 the occasion. So, too, there are annual pilgrimages to waterfalls such
[788] as *Saut d'Eau*, where the loa mount their "horses" in profusion.

[780] Within the hounfor, during a service, the cult priest and the servitors
782 pour "libations" of water on the earth, so that the loa may be refreshed.
776 And virtually without end, the hounfor is the scene of ritual ceremonies
823 in which the loa is bathed and thus "renewed" in the heads of his
778 servitors.*

* [For footnote, see category 116, p. 351.--Analyst]

The importance of water in Vodoun has a fundamentally West African 171
character. Among the Yoruba and the Ashanti and in Dahomey, for 771
example, water rites are a significant aspect of religious ritual. Hersko- 823
vits notes the frequency of religious pilgrimages to streams in West 796
Africa. 778

> In one instance, at Abeokuta, a belocked procession of worshipers left a shrine atop a high hill, followed a long path to the riverside over two miles away, and returned before the ceremonies could be carried out at the shrine of the god. On one occasion, in Dahomey, the bed of the sacred stream run dry was "filled" from nearby wells so that this water could be ritually redrawn for use in an especially important ceremony. Among the Ashanti, pilgrimages to Lake Bosumtwe and other sacred bodies of water regularly occur. And it is on such occasions that the spirit of the river or lake or sea manifests itself, by "entering the head" of the devotee and causing him to fling himself, possibly possessed, into the water.[8A]

So it is also in Haiti, where possession at the river's edge may cause 823
the devotee to leap into the river. At Saut d'Eau, possessed persons 782
plunge into the waterfall without regard for their safety, being in the 778
care of the loa who have mounted them.

Into this water complex the Christian rite of baptism has been easily 177
absorbed, providing merely a new act of veneration for water and its 772
properties. In the Haitian mind baptism is not far removed from the 823
lavé tête ritual, the washing of the head, or the *refraichi tête*, the "re- 778
freshing" of the head, both of which are acts in propitiation of the 782
loa.[9A] So related is the baptismal concept in the Haitian mind, that the 775
term "baptise" is used to describe the lavé tête; it is said that the loa is 851
being "baptized." So also are drums "baptized," not to mention yams, and
even the hounfor itself.

Marriage to a Loa

Although the term *hounsi* (spirit wife, or wife of the spirit) is applied 588
to a large class of servitors of the Vodoun temple, only a small number 594
of servitors ever pass through rites which give them a husband-wife or wife-husband relationship with a loa. Reasons for these mystic marriages vary, but usually the rituals take place upon the prescription of a cult priest who interprets the will of the deities concerned. Most of the mystic marriages of which I have heard have taken place in the general area of Port-au-Prince and the Cul-de-Sac Plain. In some other areas of Haiti it appears that no such rites have taken place locally within the memory of the elder inhabitants. One aged man living near Belladère declared: "It [marriage to a loa] is impossible. People serve loa, they do not marry them. A man does not marry his burro. A loa

[8A] [Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past, p. 233. Cf. p. 351, Category 116. --Analyst]

[9A] [It is of interest to note the perseverance of traditional attitudes toward water rites in certain negro cults in the United States. River baptism often is attended by ecstatic seizures in familiar form. (Cf. p. 351, Category 116. --Analyst]

[P 75]

6. Songs of the Peristyle

The songs that are sung in the peristyle are virtually numberless and have a wide range of themes. In general, they are in the spirit of supplication or placation. Preponderantly they relate in some way to the deities. A loa may be described, invoked, or called upon to perform certain deeds. He may be cajoled, joked with, and even criticized. But it is all a family affair. The servitors and the *fidèles* are the loa's "children," his "horses," his "leaves in the woods." The loa, the spirits of the dead, and the living members of the cult are all members of the same "nation." Whether supplication or admonition, the songs of the peristyle and the hounfor all have an intimate character. The affairs of the loa are the affairs of the société. What concerns one individual concerns all. 533 782 784 776 [769]

The themes of the songs have to do with the drama of the cult ritual, the coming and going of the deities, sickness and death, the welfare of the dead, and the behavior of the living. 533 784 782 776 ●

The cult service is a dramatic presentation which synchronizes and brings into sharp focus the heritage of religious and folk beliefs. The songs describe and evaluate what is going on. Sometimes they are cryptic and tangent, but to those participating and those watching they are clear. As the action is usually related and progressive, so are the songs. Each song has its own place and its own meaning. One song is not readily interchangeable with another. Each service has its appropriate music. So does each developing phase of the hounfor ritual.

Some of the songs are addressed to the loa; others seem to be the words of the loa themselves. In many of the songs there is an implicit dialogue between one or more loa and the singers. This dialogue is not rendered in a form which is immediately understandable to a stranger. There is a constantly shifting point of view, so that sometimes the words are third-person comments about the loa or the situation,

533 sometimes they are the words of the deity, sometimes words addressed
794 to the deity. The name of the loa may appear anywhere in the song, as
796 both an invocational word and a rhythmic device, with the result that
776 unless one is aware of the song structure he may lose the sense and
533 intent of the words. In these two lines, for example:

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Master Agwé comes from the sea,
My cannon is loaded.

796 The first line describes what happens, from the standpoint of a third
person; the second line is a statement by the loa Agwé. Or, take this single line:

Marie Louise oh, we are mixed up!

Here Marie Louise seems to be the person addressed, but in fact it is Marie Louise who is talking. Again:

I don't see my blood, Master Ogoun!

It is not Ogoun who is addressed; the words are his own.

As in nonreligious songs, there is a pattern stanza which is repeated over and over again. As the song goes on, there may be variations for interest and certain embellishments, but by and large the form remains constant. In religious singing there are relatively few examples of songs which progress from one idea to another. When the theme has been stated, that is the song.

533 One of the preliminary songs in many ritual services is a greeting to
539 the men and women of the société who are present. It is an *ochan*, or
794 salute of welcome, and comes before the loa themselves are addressed:

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Messieurs-dames bonsoir!	Gentlemen and ladies, good evening!
M'apé mandé nou!	I ask you!
Messieurs-dames bonsoir!	Gentlemen and ladies, good evening!
M'apé mandé nou	I ask you
Qui gens nous yé? [Ex. 42]	What people are we?

The answer to the question is implicit, for they are the people of the société, members of the Arada "nation" or Anago "nation," as the case may be.

788 In almost any service of the Dahomey "nation" the first supplicatory
796 song is addressed to Legba, the keeper of the gate, the guardian of the
533 crossroads, and the "go-between" who intercedes with other loa in the
794 affairs of men. The first appeal to Legba is to open the gate, over which
he is master, so that the voices of supplication may be heard and understood. The open gate also provides access for other loa to the service.

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they have no feet and climb into the nearest palm tree. This song comments on Tijean's ability to climb with his single foot. (Haitians do not "shinny" up trees, but walk up, bracing the soles of the feet against the trunk.)

Tijean ou pas gainyain pieds,	Tijean, you have no feet,
Tijean ou pas gainyain pieds,	Tijean, you have no feet,
Comment ou fai monté cocoyé?	How do you climb the coconut tree?
Lans bayè ro Legba, Jean Pétro,	By using Legba's gate, Jean Pétro,
Lans bayè ro!	By using the gate!

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When the loa begin to arrive in the hounfor to participate in the ceremonies, there is usually a song taking note of their coming. Sometimes the words describing the action are the deity's own account of what is happening, as in this song to the loa Sobo:

C'est passé n'ap passé là!
C'est passé ma passé là!
É hounsi bossale é yo lommain nom moin!
Yo lommain nom moin yo lommain nom moin!
Yo rélé hounsi kanzo!
Yo rélé Daromain!
Yo rélé mwé! [Ex. 50]

I am passing through, I am passing through!
I am passing, I am passing here!
É, the hounsi bossale call my name!
They are calling for me, they are calling for me!
The hounsi kanzo are calling!
Dahomey is calling!
They are calling me!

In another rite one might hear this song about the arrival of the deity Simba, from the point of view of the servitors rather than of the loa:

Simba Kitta vini wè moin, oh!
Oh Simba wa vini wè moin là, oh saints yè! [Ex. 51]

Simba Kitta comes to see me, oh!
Oh, Simba will come to see me here, oh saints!

When the deity Boulicha Nago comes in, there is a call for the drums to be played:

Nago 'rivé-é,	Nago arrives,
Boulicha Nago 'rivé-é!	Boulicha Nago arrives!
Nago 'rivé-é,	Nago arrives,
Boulicha Nago 'rivé-é!	Boulicha Nago arrives!
Li lè li tempe bata là!	It is time, beat the drums!
Li lè li tempe bata là!	It is time, beat the drums!
Nago 'rivé jodi-à oh enhé! [Ex. 52]	Nago comes today, oh, *enhé!*

Sobo, too, demands his drums as he arrives, as well as all the other paraphernalia for his ritual:

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Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Sobo mandé hounsi 'Llada!	Sobo asks for his Allada hounsi!
Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Sobo mandé tambou' Rada!	Sobo asks for his Arada drums!
Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Sobo mandé pouin Allada!	Sobo asks for his Allada magic!
Coté yo coté yo? [Ex. 53]	Where are they, where are they?

When more than one loa comes into the service at the same time there is confusion. Each loa is supposed to await his turn, so that the ritual and the dance may be conducted in an orderly way. Sometimes, however, two or more dieties come in at once, throwing the orderly process out of gear. This song takes note of the simultaneous arrival of the loa Adja, Loko, Sobo, Sedje, and others.

Adja non mêlé, oh Adja oh!
Adja non mêlé!
Non mêlé Papa Loko, non mêlé jodi-à!

Adja non mêlé, oh Adja oh!
Adja non mêlé!
Non mêlé Sedje assez non mêlé jodi-à!

Adja non mêlé, oh Adja oh!
Adja non mêlé!
Non mêlé kilé oudé Nèg' Sobo non mêlé jodi-à! [Ex. 54]

Adja we are mixed, oh, Adja, oh!
Adja we are mixed!
We are mixed Papa Loko, we are mixed up today!

Adja we are mixed, oh, Adja, oh!
Adja we are mixed!
We are mixed Sedje, enough, we are mixed up today!

Adja we are mixed, oh, Adja, oh!
Adja we are mixed!
We are mixed all the time, Nèg' Sobo, we are mixed up today!

When the loa come in en masse this way, some are asked to retire so that the service can proceed smoothly. In a similar instance, the deity Marie Louise is willing to withdraw from the scene but demands that a present or sacrifice be given to her first. [982]

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Marie Louise oh nou mêlé!	Marie Louise, oh, we are mixed up!
Marie Louise oh nou mêlé!	Marie Louise, oh, we are mixed up!
Cadé ça ou ba moin pou'm allé?	Where is my gift so that I can go?

Often, when it is time to leave the service, the deity announces through the medium of the song that he has other affairs to attend to elsewhere. Ogoun Achadé, for example, makes a swift departure:

Ogoun volé!	Ogoun flies!
Anago!	Anago!
Ogoun volé Achadé!	Ogoun flies Achadé!
Anago Papa! [Ex. 55]	Anago Papa!

As the deity Général Brisé departs, he tells his servitors that he is "going to God," and that he turns responsibility for their affairs over to them:

Général Brisé pays ya nan main oh!
Ago-é! Ago-é-é!
Général Brisé pays ya nan main oh!
Pays ya nan main
M'pral Bondieu djab oh! [Ex. 56]

General Brisé, the country is in your hands, oh!
Ago-é! Ago-é-é!
General Brisé, the country is in your hands, oh!
The country is in your hands,
I am going to God, oh!

The loa Bumba, in reply to a query, declares that he must go because he has work to do in his fields:

Bumba qui coté prallé?	Bumba, where are you going?
Bumba qui coté prallé?	Bumba, where are you going?
Bumba qui coté prallé?	Bumba, where are you going?
Bumba qui coté prallé?	Bumba, where are you going?
M'planté manga!	I am planting manga!
Planté patate!	Planting potatoes!
Planté jowmou!	Planting pumpkins!
Planté banane!	Planting plantains!
Waille Bumba qui coté prallé? [Ex. 57]	*Waille* Bumba, where are you going?

The deities Malt' Bois and Malt' Dleau declare as they depart that they are on their way to *Africa*, and leave the impression that things are pretty nice over there:

Malt' Dleau qui so'ti nans dleau!	Malt' Dleau who comes out of the water!
Malt' Bois qui so'ti nans bois!	Malt' Bois who comes out of the woods!
Nan Guinée plaisi-à belle oh!	In Africa pleasure is beautiful, oh!
A n'allé wè yo! [Ex. 58]	We are going to see!

As the loa Mambo Ayida of the Guinée pantheon leaves the hounfor to return to Africa, her "children" ask her not to stay there too long. And they ask her to bring back to Haiti with her some good magic for use in the hounfor:

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Mambo Ayida é!
Pral nan Guinée-à, pinga ou misé-à m'tendé!
Si ou joind bon ouanga wa po'té!
Si ou joind bon lotion wa po'té! [Ex. 59]

Mambo Ayida *é!*
Go to Africa, take care not to stay, I am waiting!
If you find a good ouanga, bring it!
If you find a good lotion, bring it!

Giving food to the loa is a focal point in religious rituals. Many songs describe the sacrifice, signify that the loa are waiting for their food, or otherwise dramatize this significant activity. In the following song the deity Damballa asks for the goat with which he is to be fed.

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Damballa Wèdo oh c'est sang-é!
Damballa mandé tête cabrit,
C'est sang li mandé!
Damballa Wèdo oh c'est sang-é!
Damballa mandé tête cabrit,
C'est sang li mandé!
Damballa Wèdo oh c'est sang li mandé!
Oh assez! [Ex. 60]

Damballa Wèdo, oh, it is blood *é!*
Damballa asks for the head of the goat,
It is blood he asks for!
Damballa Wèdo, oh, it is blood *é!*
Damballa asks for the head of the goat,
It is blood he asks for!
Damballa Wèdo, oh, it is blood he asks for!
Oh, enough!

For Ogoun they sometimes sing:

Papa Ogoun qui gain' yun mangé
Tout moune pas mangé li!
Enhé enhé, oh! [Ex. 61]

It is Papa Ogoun who has a feast,
Not everyone may eat it!
Enhé enhé, oh!

But sometimes Ogoun is dissatisfied that there is no feast ready for him, and he complains.

533	Ogoun é oh moin blessé!	Ogoun *é*, oh, I am hurt!
539	Ogoun é oh moin blessé!	Ogoun *é*, oh, I am hurt!
776	A pas m'blessé Ferei,	Now I am hurt, Ferei,
	M'pas wè sang moin!	I don't see my blood!
782	M'pas wè sang'm Mait Ogoun,	I don't see my blood, Master Ogoun,
794	Moin pas wè sang moin!	I don't see my blood!
796	M'pas wè sang'm Badagry,	I don't see my blood, Badagry
	Moin pas wè sang moin là! [Ex. 62]	I don't see my blood here!

The loa Moundongue, like Damballa, likes goat meat, and it can be cooked in two ways:

Yè yè yè!
Moundongue oh!
Oh Moundongue oh yè yè yè!
Moundongue mangé cabrit boulé,
Moundongue mangé cabrit boucané! [Ex. 63]

Yè yè yè!
Moundongue, oh!
Oh, Moundongue, oh, *yè yè yè!*
Moundongue eats boiled goat,
Moundongue eats roasted goat!

Or again, the servitors may sing:

Cote pasé na ba'ou mangé, oh Ti Moundongue nà!
Cote pasé na ba'ou mangé, Moundongue nà! [Ex. 64]

Wherever you are, we give you food, oh, Ti Moundongue there!
Wherever you are, we give you food, Moundongue there!

[788] [789] The loa Adja also has animal sacrifices and special dishes for his mangé, but sometimes he—and the "horses" he mounts—will eat broken glass:

Oh Adja mangé bounda démijon!
Adja véco' véco'!
Adja mangé bounda démijon!
Adja véco' véco'! [Ex. 65]

Oh, Adja eats the bottom of a bottle!
Adja, old one, old one!
Adja eats the bottom of a bottle!
Adja, old one, old one!

For the loa Ianman Ibo the proper sacrifice is a rooster, and the deity declares:

Nanchon Ibo m'ta mangé gros coq oh nanchon Ibo!
Nanchon Ibo m'ta mangé gros coq!
Nanchon Ibo m'ta mangé gros coq oh nanchon Ibo!
Waille waille waille! [Ex. 66]

Ibo nation, I am going to eat a large cock, oh, Ibo nation! 533
Ibo nation, I am going to eat a large cock! 539
Ibo nation, I am going to eat a large cock, oh, Ibo nation! 772
Wailé wailé wailé! 794
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(782)

The Ibo service is often a strictly family affair rather than a broad community ritual. The family replies to the Ibo loa in the following song. [184]

La famille vin' payé sang,	The family comes to pay blood,
Vin' payé sang!	Comes to pay blood!
La famille vin' payé sang,	The family comes to pay blood,
Ibo Lazile volonté! [Ex. 41]	It is Ibo Lazile's wish!

The loa Nago frankly tells the people that if they want to come to his house (his shrine, or the houmfor) they will have to pay something for the privilege:

Si nou wè coté'm demeuré,	If you see where I live,
Si nou wè coté'm demeuré,	If you see where I live,
Fau'm payé bonbon pou' ça!	You have to give cookies for that!
Anago Nago!	Anago Nago!
Vin' wè coté'm demeuré! [Ex. 67]	Come see where I live!

The "dead" spirit Gèdé Nimbo, the guardian or master of the cemetery, who often engages in bizarre activities which poke fun at the codes of social behavior, is sometimes regarded as a special protector of children. Precisely because he is overlord of all that has to do with the grave, his good will is sought, particularly in behalf of the young; and in many services of the Nago rites his protection is bought by money gifts: 776 782- 796 794:

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Gèdé main la'gent,
M'apé ba ou la'gent la'gent,
M'apé ba ou la'gent pou' ga'dé zenfants la yo!
M'apé ba ou la'gent pou' ga'dé zenfants la yo!

Gèdé, take the money,
I will give you money, money,
I will give you money to guard the children!
I will give you money to guard the children!

In the course of the ceremonies when, from time to time, the honored loa of the occasion enters into the head of one of the servitors, the houngan will place in the hands of the mounted person a lighted candle and a pitcher of water. The possessed servitor approaches the sacred center post and spills a little water on the ground for the deity. After certain other rituals, the houngan, or one of his assistants, conducts the mounted "horse" into the houmfor to the altar. In the following song, as the possession comes on, there is a call for a lighted candle. 787 789 794 796

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Simbi non wè oh!
Simbi djab non wè!
Oh Simbi non wè oh!
Simbi non wè oh!
Simbi wa limé chandelle pou' clairé moin! [Ex. 68]

Simbi doesn't see, oh!
Stern Simbi doesn't see!
Oh, Simbi doesn't see, oh!
Simbi doesn't see, oh!
Simbi [says] you will light the candle so I can see!

Some of the songs refer to the dancing of the loa who enter the bodies of the servitors. The deity Loko asks for his hounsi, through whom he will dance:

Coté pitits moin yo,
Mainnin'm nan houmfor, m'ap djaillé!
Na pas Loko,
Coté pitits moin yo! [Ex. 69]

Where are my children,
Take me into the houmfor, I will *djaillé!*
Now, Loko,
Where are my children!

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Another deity, who is not expressly named, tells his "leaves in the woods"—that is, his hounsi—that he has danced since he was a child:

Fè nan bois hélé moin!	Leaves in the woods call me!
Oh dépi'm piti m'ap dansé!	Oh, since I was small I have danced!
Fè nan bois hé-é!	Leaves in the woods *hé-é!*
Fè nan bois hélé moin oh!	Leaves in the woods call me, oh!
Oh fè nan bois hélé moin oh!	Oh, leaves in the woods call me, oh!
Dépi'm piti m'ap dansé!	Since I was small I have danced!
Fè nan bois hélé moin! [Ex. 70]	Leaves in the woods call me!

In the *following* song the loa Macaya Bumba is called upon by the hounsi to hurry up and get on with his dancing.

Macaya Bumba Bumba!	Macaya Bumba Bumba!
Lévé dansé!	Get up and dance!
Macaya Bumba!	Macaya Bumba!
Bumba mon cher vini dansé! [Ex. 71]	Bumba my dear, come and dance!

A song for the deity Ianman in the course of the Ibo dancing and ritual goes:

Ibo lélé!
Ibo lélé!
Nanchon Ibo ça ou gainpain non ça Ibo lélé!

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Ianman con ça, con ça!
Ianman con ça'm dansé Ibo!
Ianman con ça, con ça!
Ianman con ça'm dansé Ibo!
Ianman con ça, con ça!
Ianman *é-wa é-wa é-wa!* [Ex. 72]

Ibo *lélé!*
Ibo *lélé!*
Ibo Nation, what are you doing there, Ibo *lélé!*
Ianman, like that, like that!
Ianman, like that I dance the Ibo!
Ianman, like that, like that!
Ianman, like that I dance the Ibo!
Ianman, like that, like that!
Ianman *é-wa é-wa é-wa!*

Another song containing the same zestful appreciation of dancing is for the loa Kitta. The words "my mother isn't dead" and "my father isn't dead" are simply expressions of good fortune and happiness which embellish the command to do the Kitta steps:

Ai ti ga'çon ba'm pas Kitta!
Kitta Congo oh ti ga'çon ba'm pas Kitta!

Manman pas mouri ba'm pas Kitta!
Kitta Congo oh ti ga'çon ba'm pas Kitta!

M'dit piti ga'çon ba'm pas Kitta!
Kitta Congo oh ti ga'çon ba'm pas Kitta!

Papa pas mouri ba'm pas Kitta!
Kitta Congo oh ti ga'çon ba'm pas Kitta! [Ex. 73]

Ai, little man, give me the Kitta steps!
Kitta Congo, oh, little man, give me the Kitta steps!

My mother is not dead, give me the Kitta steps!
Kitta Congo, oh, little man, give me the Kitta steps!

I say little man, give me the Kitta steps!
Kitta Congo, oh, little man, give me the Kitta steps!

My father is not dead, give me the Kitta steps!
Kitta Congo, oh, little man, give me the Kitta steps! [3]

A song for the loa Bambarra describes the movements of his dance. Bambarra is symbolized by the crab, and the dance posture with "low hips" is regarded as characteristic of the crab's movements: [535]

Bambarra kap promnin, taille ba!
Bambarra allé promnin, taille ba!

[3] [For footnote, see category 116, p. 351.--Analyst]

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Bambarra is walking, low hips!
Bambarra is going to walk, low hips!

Damballa Wèdo, being a snake deity, "threads" or "winds" his way like a serpent, and this song describes a serpentine course taken by the dancers as Damballa (here identified as a Nago man) arrives:

Filé na filé, Damballa Wèdo vini wè moin!
Filé na filé, Nèg' Nago vini wè'm là! [Ex. 74]

Wind, we wind, Damballa Wèdo comes to see me!
Wind, we wind, the Nago man comes to see me here!

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After the dancing has been going on for a long while and the pace is fast, there may be a song of banter, such as the following from the Dahomey rites. The dancers sing *laillé, laillé!*, describing a figure of the dance in which the skirts are swirled, and note that they have worn out the drummers. They even offer to carry on their backs those dancers who are ready to fall by the wayside:

Laillé laillé!
Oh laillé laillé oh viéco'!
Tambouyé bouké!
Tambouyé bouké viéco'!
Laillé laillé oh viéco'!
Laillé laillé tambouyé bouké houngan'm!
M'po'té sou corps moin vié sor!
Tambouyé bouké ça!
Laillé laillé! [Ex. 75]

Laillé laillé!
Oh, *laillé laillé*, oh, old people!
The drummers are tired!
The drummers are tired, old people!
Laillé laillé, oh, old people!
Laillé laillé, the drummers are tired, my *houngan!*
I'll carry you on my back, old sister!
The drummers are tired there!
Laillé laillé!

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Interspersed among the songs of the hounfor there are sometimes warnings or admonitions. Usually they are tangent and indirect in statement, and may be from the point of view of the loa or of the houngan. In the following pouin song, which accompanies the ritual of making magic, there is a warning to certain people who will feel the effects of the magic. The ceremony includes, among other things, the dropping of lemons, roots, and leaves by the houngan into his sacred basin or pond. The houngan sings:

Trois fé trois citron oh! 533
Trois fé trois citron oh! 539
Moin dit *rwo*, youn jour ou wa besoin moin! 776
Trois fé trois racine oh! 626
Moin dit oui, youn jour ou wa besoin moin! 796
Gainyain bassin moin trois racine tombé ladans, 793?
Quand ou wa' blié fau' ramassé chongé! [Ex. 76]

Three leaves, three lemons, oh!
Three leaves, three lemons, oh!
I say *rwo*, one day you are going to need me!
Three leaves, three roots, oh!
I say yes, one day you are going to need me!
I have my pond into which three roots fall,
When you wish to forget you will have to remember!

In another song the houngan warns against ingratitude on the part of persons for whom special magical services have been carried out:

Ouanga ça oh ouanga chaud!
Ouanga ça ouanga chaud!
Lè pou' payé li pinga ou fâché!
Ou mandé'm ouanga là ou content!
Ou mandé'm ouanga là ou content!
Lè pou' payé li pinga ou fâché! [Ex. 77]

This ouanga, oh, hot ouanga!
This ouanga, oh, hot ouanga!
When it's time to pay for it don't be angry!
You ask me for the ouanga, you are happy!
You ask me for the ouanga, you are happy!
When it's time to pay for it don't be angry!

Somberly and in metaphor, the deity Kitta Démambré speaks of an unhappy event which occurred in the town of Léogane, and warns those concerned that it must not happen again:

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Kitta Démambré, pinga ou fai'm ça 'core oh!
Nan Léogane ti poule-là mouri nan zé!
Nan Léogane ti poule-là mouri nan zé oh!
Kitta Démambré, pinga ou fai'm ça encore oh! [Ex. 78]

Kitta Démambré, take care that you don't do that to me again, oh!
In Léogane the little chicken died in its egg!
In Léogane the little chicken died in its egg!
Kitta Démambré, take care that you don't do that to me again!

An unnamed spirit warns that the moment for placation has come and suggests that calling on him after he has gone from the *pavillon* of the houngan Derés would be of no use.

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violently. The hounsi complain that Malt' Grand Chimin treats them as though they were flour being ground in a mill:

Temp' changé nouvelle allé!
Bonjou' Papa bonjou' Roi Grand Chimin!
M'mandé Papa ça'm fai!
Temp' changé nouvelle allé!
Bonjou' Papa bonjou' Roi Grand Chimin!
M'mandé Papa ça'm fai!
Papa m'pas maïs moulin!
Nou dit na bougit moin!
Papa m'pas maïs moulin!
Nou dit na bougit moin! [Ex. 85]

Times change, the news goes out!
Good day, Papa, good day, Roi Grand Chimin!
I ask you, Papa, what did I do?
Times change, the news goes out!
Good day, Papa, good day, Roi Grand Chimin!
I ask you, Papa, what did I do?
Papa, I am not corn flour!
You say you will grind me!
Papa, I am not corn flour!
You say you will grind me!

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When there is sickness within the société there may be songs for the absent ones. Here is a song for an ailing hounsi:

Moin allé wè li, hounsi malade oh!
Moin allé wè ça, hounsi malade oh!
Moin allé wè houngan, hounsi malade oh! [Ex. 86]

I am going to see there, the hounsi is sick, oh!
I am going to see it, the hounsi is sick, oh!
I am going to see, houngan, the hounsi is sick, oh!

Again, the members of the société call upon Ogoun, or St. Jacques, to help one of their number who is sick:

St. Jacques maré choual li
Li pas dit personne oh,
Véyé li pou' moin!
Li met gainyain verre,
Li met gainyain maline nan dos,
St. Jacques oh!
Ba li lavie pou' moin! [Ex. 87]

St. Jacques ties his horse,
He tells no one, oh,
Take care of him for me!
He may have worms,
He may have sores on his back,
St. Jacques, oh!
Protect him for me!

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Ogoun is the dispenser of rum, and in virtually all Ogoun rituals rum is at some time or another in evidence. Sometimes rum is poured into a hot iron pot and bursts into flame. The iron pot is described as Ogoun's house, which is on fire. But there is no grief, because Ogoun is the master of fire: 796 776 273 [539] [533]

Pierre, Pierre Narcisse oh!	Pierre, Pierre Narcisse, oh!
Yago moulo-é!	*Yago moulo-é!*
Caille Ogoun boulé!	Ogoun's house is burning!
Guildive Ogoun bel ô!	Ogoun's distillery is beautiful!
Nu consolé! [Ex. 88]	We console ourselves!

Some of the ritual songs that have persisted through the years have 533 lost their explicit meaning but continue to survive because of beautiful 539 melodies and perhaps the strange images they evoke. Such a song is 776 this one to the loa Atti Daï, from the Dahomey service: [178]

Atti Daï oh!	Atti Daï, oh!
Yo voyé dit moin	They sent to tell me
Min soleil malade!*	The sun was sick!
Quan'm té rivé	When I arrived
Moin jouinn soleil mouri!	I found the sun had died!
Quan'm té rivé	When I arrived
Moin jouinn soleil mouri!	I found the sun had died!
C'est regrettant ça	What grief it was
Pou'm enterré soleil! [Ex. 89]	For me to bury the sun!

One of the truly lovely songs of the Dahomey rites, both in melody and in lyrics, is the following one to the deity Ezilie. It shows clear [177] evidence of Catholic ritual influence in both its text and its music. Ezilie Fréda, who seems to be speaking most of the lines, is identified with the Virgin Mary, and the tune of this piece casts her more in her Catholic role than her African. The deity is speaking from Yaguna, a place described as being "on the other side of the water." In form the song is atypical in that it has more than one movement and progresses from one idea to another.

Ezilie Naimain oh!
Ezilie Naimain oh!
Ezilie oh, c'est moin Yaguna!

Ezilie n'ap marché n'ap couri n'ap parlé pou' temps y'ap parlé paroles moin!
Ezilie n'ap marché n'ap couri pou' temps y'ap parlé paroles mouri!
Ezilie Naimain oh!
Ezilie Fréda oh Naimain oh!
Ezilie Fréda oh, c'est moin Yaguna!

Mesdames nan yo chita non caille là yo vlé djallé oh tout temps soleil pas lévé!
Mesdames yo passé yo mandé si à [illegible] y'apé [illegible] la coté yo!

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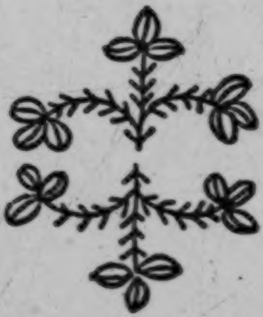
*Some Haitian informants [illegible] that soleil meant "sun." Others felt that this word in the song was really [illegible], a diminutive of [illegible], another name for Atti Daï. [114] [115]

7. In the Mapou Tree: Magic, Demons, and Compacts



It is said by many Haitians that the loa are inclined to shun the mapou 796
tree, for it is the secret rendezvous of countless kinds of demons. On 778
certain nights, they say, you may see a chink of light showing through 824
the trunk of the great mapou, indicating that the demons are in macabre session.

Sometimes it is the baka who meet there to feast and discuss their blood-curdling plans. The baka are described as small and evil creatures, human in form, with red eyes, and legs or arms covered with skin but no flesh. They change into animals at will and may roam the countryside as cats, dogs, or cattle. The baka are notorious sorcerers, and they perform only malevolent acts. They are reputed to "eat people," literally as well as figuratively. Stories are heard of such-and-such a man or child who disappeared and was presumed to have been eaten at a feast in the mapou tree. One man who passed a mapou in the dark of night reported that he heard muffled singing coming from within its trunk, accompanied by the pounding of mortars in which a gruesome feast was
being pulverized. But the baka "eat" people also in the sense that they 776
destroy them. It is said sometimes that a person with a withered arm or [1732]
leg has been "eaten" by a baka. Perhaps he was an innocent victim; possibly he struck a horse or dog which was really a baka; or perhaps he simply brushed against a baka in the market place. Sometimes the baka directs his evil in the most indiscriminate sort of way, "eating"
whatever human being he meets. Animals which behave strangely are 796
suspected of being baka in disguise, and they are given wide berth. 825

A cow once found within an old brick-covered spring was taken to be a baka because no cow could have passed through the small doorway of the spring. It was assumed that she had entered as a small baka and had then changed to her animal form. The spring went unused for days, until some children reported that the baka had vanished. The cow was

house. A round, polished Indian stone is occasionally used as a *garde* 789
habitation. And old people speak of a very powerful charm known
as a *gros arrête* which in former times was placed on the trail to protect
entire villages or valleys.

Still another potent defensive charm is the *pouin*, which is the 789
product of ritual magic within the cult temple. A pouin may be an 794
actual bundle containing a formula of special ingredients; more often, 796
it is invisible, consisting of magical forces unleashed into space by
the houngan. There are many ceremonies in the hounfor devoted to
the projecting of these magical forces. They are called *cérémonie pouin*
or *cérémonie magie* and are dramatized by special cult songs and dances.
Sometimes the magic ceremony is woven into a more generalized cult
ritual. The powers of the pouin are regarded as wider and more potent
than those of the arrête. Pouins are said to protect an individual or a
group not only against other magic but also against natural phenomena
and accident. A pouin may ward off lightning, for example, or protect
one from falling trees or from shipwreck or drowning. But it is not
solely defensive magic. It may bring success in fishing, or produce a good [777]
crop in one's garden, or aid human fertility. [842]

Since the crops and the garden are the substance of life, much atten- 789
tion is given to their protection. An enemy may attack a man or his 685
household through garden magic. He may bury a ouanga in the earth,
to bring sickness or ruin. He may poison a tree by performing a special [754]
rite at its foot, and its fruits will then carry disease or death to the
one who eats them. Or he may make a compact with the earth so that
it will dry up and refuse to produce for the one who tills it. Against
all these malevolent possibilities, as well as against common thieves,
the Haitian peasant has many magical and practical resources. Some [775]
people are said to employ zombies as watchmen. These fearsome
creatures will capture a trespasser and hold him for the owner of the
field.[3] Or perhaps the owner will place special arrêtes in his garden.
Occasionally a man will protect his fields by planting *piquettes* in the
earth. The *piquette* is a piece of sharpened bamboo or hard wood. Its
point is dipped into poison, and it is placed in the ground, sharpened
end up. An unwary intruder who steps on a piquette may die of his
wound.

To counteract the *maljok*, or evil eye, a man may procure from a bocor 754
a special shirt made of wide strips of red, white, and blue cloth sewed 789
together. This shirt, called a *mayo* or *manyo*, is worn for seven days if 791
the *maljok* is a rather ordinary one. If the evil force is a particularly
virulent one, however, the *mayo* will be worn as long as twenty-one

[3] [Simpson, "Haitian Peasant Economy" Journal of Negro History, October, 1940, p. 503. Cf. p. 351, Category 116. -- Analyst]

mâché carriage or on papier-mâché horses, make their appearance during 541
Rara as well as on the Day of the Kings (*Les Rois*). 536

Among the traditional paraphernalia carried by Rara groups are 541
cocomacaque sticks, cha-cha rattles, metal rattles called *tchancy*, a set of 575
rattles on a tall thin pole (called *jouconjou*), candelabra bearing candles 534
or oil lamps (*lampions*), banners and flags, and such miscellaneous musical instruments as the *grage* scraper, bamboo scraping devices, the *basse* finger drum, *assots* (beating boards), and various kinds of secular drums.

The general tone of Rara is nonreligious. The dancing is free from the 541
decorous restraints which characterize most religious ritual, and some [535]
early observers of the festival were shocked by what they saw. Some of them went so far as to attribute Haiti's dense population to the "licentious activities" and reckless abandon of the spring carnival. The Catholic [795]
Church and some political administrators have sporadically sought to [656]
suppress Rara, along with Vodoun ritual. And even today in Port-au-Prince the foreign visitor often is urged to watch the elite Mardi Gras with its floats and mulatto queens as a substitute.

Although Rara has an over-all tone of secular abandon, it has links 541
with both Catholic and Vodoun ritual. Good Friday is given over in good 177
measure to miming the story of Jesus and Judas. A perambulating band 536
may carry an effigy of Judas hanging from a pole. Another will burn the Judas effigy, or drag it in the dust as the crowd moves along the road. In another group a man playing the part of Judas may crawl on his hands and knees along the trail, while Jesus' avengers pursue him with long, cracking whips.

Tying in with Vodoun ritual, virtually all Rara drums and other 541
paraphernalia are "dedicated" or "rededicated" before Lent in special 786
hounfor services. And on the last day of Rara, usually late in the night, 534
prayers are said, the loa are called upon, and some of the festive par- [778]
aphernalia is thrown into a fire to be consumed.

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P.112-Q]

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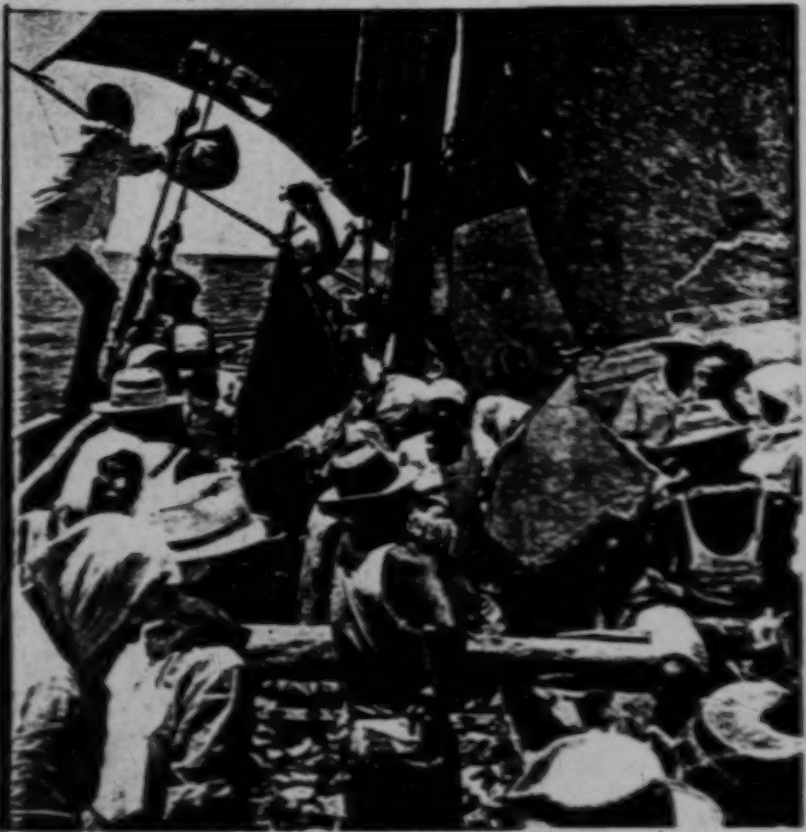

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26. Service for the loa Agwé in a boat at sea. In the center, two hounsis hold the société's flags. Between them and the houngan is the bedecked barque d'Agwé, a [illegible] miniature vessel which will be set adrift. An ogan and a drum are at the lower right.

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27. Saluting the lwa. In the center, with sword, is the laplace, flanked by two hounsi carrying sequin-studded flags. In the background, left, is the houngan with his asson.

[? 112-5]

28. *A yam harvest festival. The men are carrying the yams into the peristyle of the hounfor to be cut up and shared with the family ancestors and the loa.*

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2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P 112-T]

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29. *The bain de Noël, or Christmas bath. The men are pulverising leaves in the mortar, to the accompaniment of singing by the hounsi and drumming. Later, a "lotion" will be made of the powdered leaves, and all will share it.*

[P.112-U]

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30. A Christmas service near Léogane: ritual "bathing" in fire. The two young women are both possessed by a loa of the Guédé family, probably Jean Zombie. Their nostrils are stuffed with cotton and their jaws are bound in the manner of corpses, in honor of the deity, who is a "dead" loa. In a state of possession they seem to be impervious to the intense heat.

[illegible] 533 535 tempo. The chorus and leader sing responsively, their parts overlapping in traditional African style. The shoulder movements, foot movements, the way the arms are carried, and the typical posture of feet flat on the ground, bent knees, and swayed back—all are of African derivation.

535 These postures and movements are broad and direct. There are few of the decorative and "fine" movements that one sees in the dances of Indonesia, Cambodia, and India. Where the Javanese lays stress on the pose of the hands and the delicate movements of the fingers, the Haitian dancer is concerned with the position of the arms and the motions of the shoulders. The Indonesian sense of poised balance or suspended movement is absent. In its place there is an attitude of strong frontal assault against natural forces such as gravity, or direct submission to those forces. There is almost always a feeling of solidity and stability in Haitian posture, and of a proximity between the body and the earth, but the total effect is dynamic. Indonesian dancing seems to express a comprehension of the unseen and the supernatural; Haitian dancing seems to express an intimate understanding of nature.

535 [illegible] 182 Dancing touches on virtually every aspect of life in Haiti. It plays a part in the supplication of loa, the placation of the dead, and the making of magic; in the consecration of a hounfor, the installation of a houngan, and the initiation of cult members; in planting, harvesting, and house-building. Catholic Church holidays, Nine Nights, baptisms, the election of a new president, and ordinary social gatherings—all are celebrated, in part, at least, by dancing.

535 Haitian dancing is participative rather than exhibitionistic. It is to join rather than to watch. There are some dances, however, which require special skills, and a few which are highly individualistic. Several types of dances are described elsewhere in this book. Verbal description cannot do justice to an art such as dancing, of course; but some brief sketches may help to suggest the differences between one Haitian dance and another.

In the Congo Mazonne, for example, men and women pair off and dance face to face, making contact occasionally but only briefly. The arms are stretched forward as though to embrace the partner around the waist, but the actual embrace never materializes. The partners dance sometimes as though they are unaware of each other and are simply part of a larger group; then they approach, move as mirrored reproductions, and separate. Loin movement is free, and there is a restrained sexual intensity, though direct sexual implications are not necessarily present. Sometimes the woman holds the hem of her skirt in her hands, while the man holds his jacket open toward his partner. [831]

Mousondi. In present-day Trinidad there is a Calinda dance which 171
closely resembles the Mousondi; Puerto Rico has its Bomba Calindán; 535
and under another name the "battle dance" survives among Negro communities in Surinam. The counterpart of the Calinda in Brazil is the Capoeira, for which musical accompaniment is provided by African-style "belly harps" (musical bows with gourd resonators) called *berimbau*.
The tradition lingers on in Haiti in modern mock prize-fighting dances [178]
sometimes performed in Rara season.

The stick dance (*Battonie*) of the Haitian carnival season, mentioned in chapter 8, is of more than passing interest for the reason that almost identical dances have been reported from some areas of West Africa. In the Haitian dance (see fig. 73) the baton wielders, all males, for unexplained reasons are attired in women's clothing. A photograph made in 1958 of a baton dance among the Ewe people of Togoland depicts a scene scarcely distinguishable from a Haitian Rara performance, and it is noteworthy that its all-male cast is in women's dress.[7]

In addition, there remain a number of fragments of dances of the past. In religious ritual, on rare occasions, one may see animal dances in which the performers mimic animal movements, holding in their hands long sticks to simulate front legs. This type of dance has been reported frequently in West Africa, particularly in connection with totemic rituals.

There is a dance in the Arada ritual in which the loa Legba is in- 796
voked. A hounsi—usually a man—comes onto the dance court wearing 794
a kind of cane-crutch called the *baton* Legba, or Legba stick. The baton 535
is about the length of a cane, with a long, grotesquely twisted "handle" 171
that fits under the crotch of the legs. The dancer wraps one leg around the stick and walks as though he has only one foot. In the dance, he spins around on the stick, leaps, and pirouettes. Identification of the stick as well as the dance with Legba, and its position between the legs, seem clearly to relate it to the phallic sticks used in dances for Legba in Dahomey.

Among the secular exhibitionistic dances of Haiti, there is one in which 535
a man stands on his head and goes through erotic motions to the [831]
accompaniment of drums.

In addition to the almost countless dances of African origin or in- [171]
spiration, there is the ever-popular Meringue, a European-type social dance which is known in many forms. Haitian connoisseurs of this dance believe there are three main forms of the Meringue: the "Meringue de Concert," in which the rhythm is slow and "caressing"; the "dance Meringue," in which the rhythm is quasi-fast and very gay; and the "Meringue Coundjaille," in which the rhythm is very fast. The last

[7] [United Nations Photograph no. 62065. Cf p 352, category 116. --Analyst]

534 The craft
322 of drum making is a very skilled one, but the tools are
[412] simple: chisels, machetes, and fire. The core of the log is removed by
burning and gouging, and the outside is shaped with a machete, or
sometimes a hachet. The wood is selected and processed carefully. Firing
of the core of the log depends a good deal on how dry the wood is,
for the wood must burn slowly. It is believed that wood cut at the right
stage of growth and at the right phase of the moon is resistant to the
[824] ever-present powder-post beetles. Mahogany was once favored because
it was durable and beetle resistant, even though it was heavy. But in
recent decades mahogany has become scarce, and modern drums are
made of lighter woods.

534 Drums made in the nineteenth century not only conformed to the
798 patterns of certain West African prototypes but were also carved and
[531] decorated. Some of these old drums are still to be seen, but there are
[771] not many left. An ancient carved assotor drum (previously cited) has
fortunately been preserved by the Bureau d'Ethnologie. But between the
ravages of the powder-post beetles, age, and the periodic orgies of drum
burning by the church and misguided public officials, most of these
[648] ancient works of art have long since disappeared. During the American
occupation of Haiti—from World War I to 1932—American military
personnel also contributed to the mania for drum burning. And as late
as 1941 there was a massive, cleric-inspired drive to wipe out these
instruments as remnants of *sauvage* elements in Haitian life.

534 The effect of this war against the drum was only to improve the
178 business of the professional drum maker. Drums had become expendable,
531 hence they were made simpler. The carved decorations disappeared.
Paint was substituted, and less attention was given to detail. The important thing was to produce a good functional instrument. But the creative instincts of the drum makers sometimes still take over, and many of the modern drums are beautifully proportioned, with delicate geometric patterns carved around the base, or foot. Among certain categories of drums the painted decorations consist solely of the name of the loa to whom the instruments have been dedicated—St. Jacques perhaps, or Papa Pierre, or Èzilie.

534 Drums differ in design according to the use for which they are in-
771 tended. The Arada or Vodoun drums are used primarily in connection
794 with the dances and rituals of the Vodoun cult—the cult built around
796 the gods and rites of Arada and Yoruba theology. They resemble closely
drums which are used today in Dahomey, Nigeria, and Togoland. They
534 usually come in sets of three. The largest, the *manman* (also called
hountor or *hountogri*), may be three to four feet high. The middle-sized drum, or *second* (also called *grondé* or *moyen*), is about two feet

[Text continues on p. 193]

high. The smallest—the *bula,* or *bébé* (sometimes called *dundun*)—is 534
about eighteen or twenty inches high. They are all called sometimes by
the Yoruba name *bata,* originally applied to a two-headed instrument.

Arada drumheads are of cowhide, held in place by hardwood pegs
set into the bodies of the drums at an angle. The drums are tuned by [171]
driving in or loosening the pegs. Even the slitting of the skins where
the pegs pass through them is African in pattern. In Cuba the drums
of the Arada (there called Arara) cult are made in precisely the same
way, though they are used in batteries of four rather than three.

In a variation of the peg type of fastening, the skin is attached to a 184
hoop, which, in turn, is held in place by ropes laced to the pegs. Each 534
drum maker has his own preference as to the angle and size of the
pegs, the proportions of the drums, and the wood from which they are
made. One drum maker near Léogane claimed to be able to identify
the region from which a drum came by examination of the pegs and
the carvings around the base.

The small Arada drum, the *bula,* is usually "whipped" with two long 534
thin sticks to provide a sharp and penetrating sound. The middle-sized 171
drum is played with one bare hand and a stick. The stick may be
straight or bowed. The bowed drumstick is known as an *egida,* the name
used for the same type of stick in Dahomey.[1] On infrequent occasions
the *moyen* drum is played with two sticks—one straight and one bowed.
The large drum, the *manman,* is played by the most accomplished of
the drummers in the orchestra. He plays with one bare hand and one
stick, which may be of various forms. It may be straight, have a hook-shaped head, or be mallet-shaped; or it may be the grotesquely twisted
stick known as a *baguette Guinée.* All these forms are known in Dahomey
and elsewhere in West Africa.

The three Haitian Arada drums, supplemented by an African-style 171
bell known as an *ogan* and small gourd rattles (cha-chas), form the 178
standard orchestra for most dances of the Vodoun cult. The *ogan*—the 534
forged iron bell with an external striker—has all but disappeared in 796
recent years, along with the institution of the village forge. In its place
one may see any kind of metallic object, such as a hoe blade, a link of
chain, or a length of pipe, all of which are referred to by the old name
ogan. In Cuba the Arada cult preserves the bell, both in single and
double form, under the same name. The word *ogan* probably derives
from the Yoruba term for this instrument, *ogourou.*

Playing in concert, the three Arada drums produce a range of tones, 533
and the player of the *manman*—the chief of orchestra—adds to the 534
effect by frequently striking his stick against the side of the drum above

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[1] [Herskovits and Herskovits, Suriname Folk-Lore, p. 87
The stick is also known in Suriname. Cf. p. 353,
Category 116. --Analyst]

534 533 the pegs. High notes are achieved by striking the drumhead near the rim, and low notes near the center.

534 516 The drummers usually sit together on a bench or in chairs at one side of the dance court. The larger and middle drums are slightly tipped to keep their "mouths" open; the *bula* stands squarely on its base and is therefore somewhat muted. The player of the *manman* often drums in a standing position, bracing the instrument by means of a cord around his thigh.

534 796 Another drum associated with the Arada rites is the *assotor*. This drum is usually about six feet high, and may be from two to two and a half feet in diameter. It is played in an upright position, and two or three small "windows" near the base permit the sound to emerge. [794] This big drum is used only for the Assotor service, at which the Dahomey "nation" plays host to the loa of all the various rites. Usually there is only a single drummer, who plays while standing on a bench or raised platform; but on occasion, two or even three drummers play simultaneously on the single drumhead.

534 171 It is interesting to note in passing that most of the Vodoun drums have Dahomean names and are of Dahomean design, despite the fact that Yoruban religious motifs have survived. The Yoruban double-headed *bata* drum, used in Nigeria for invocation of the principal deities, appears to have survived in decadent form on the island of La Gonave, where it is known as *pongwé*. Curiously, it is played not like the Yoruban *bata* (one hand on each head) but like another Yoruban instrument, 534 the *dundun*, or pressure drum. The instrument is held under one arm and played only on the forward head. Significantly enough, this drum [994] is said to be used only for Nago (Yoruba) rites. Another drum reserved for Nago services is found in the region of Léogane. It resembles the [796] Arada drum in every respect except that it stands on three carved legs.

Drums associated with the services of the Congo "nation" are distinctly different from those found in Vodoun ritual. No drumsticks are used, and the heads are of goatskin rather than cowhide and are held in place by a system of cords and hoops. The Congo drum seen today stands about three feet high; old people say that within their memory there was a variety of Congo drum as tall as a man. Unlike the Arada [531] drum, the Congo drum usually has no carved or painted decoration. For the "pure" Congo rites, two of these instruments, accompanied by gourd or metal rattles of various kinds, constitutes an orchestra. One typically Congo rattling device, called *mayoyo*, consists of three large gourds containing pebbles, on the top of a long pole.

A variant of the Congo drum is used for Pétro rites. It is similar

Except for the "aperture for the escape of the sound," the Boggo instrument is identical with the Haitian earth bow. The resemblance of the instrument to a spring snare strongly suggests that it may have been developed from some such device for catching game. This possibility is strengthened by the use of the earth bow among certain of the Bambarra hunters of the French Sudan as a game lure, the music played upon it being thought to have magical properties to attract animals to the region of the hunt.[9] A "portable" type of spring snare used among the Ashanti of Ghana is strikingly similar in form to the Haitian "portable" earth bow (see fig. 80).[a] 534 171 174

This instrument has survived not only in Haiti but in the United States as well. The washtub device that is an important part of American Negro folk music is a clear development of the earth bow. The washtub is inverted and a cord is attached to the tin bottom. The other end of the cord is fastened to a stick which is braced against the lip of the bottom side of the tub. The stick and the cord are manipulated precisely like the Haitian and African instruments. There is implicit evidence that the role of the washtub has been taken over in modern jazz orchestras by the double-bass fiddle. 534 171

Another device of African provenience is the Haitian *marimba* (also called *malimba*, *manimba*, and *marimbula*). It consists of a wooden box upon which a series of metal strips is mounted in such a way that they may be plucked with the fingers. In the face of the box, directly behind the keys, there is an aperture to permit the escape of the sound. The number of keys varies from three to seven or more, though some of them may produce duplicate tones. The instrument is usually about the size of a soap box. The musician sits upon it, facing the same way as the keyboard, and plays with his hands between his knees. The marimba is used for carnival music and for dances of the secular types, frequently in combination with a guitar, claves, and a cha-cha. It is a West Indian development of the small African *m'bila* or *sansa*, or "thumb piano." Several examples of the smaller instruments played with the thumbs have been found elsewhere in the West Indies, notably in Cuba,[10] and large forms of the sansa have been reported in recent years in Africa.

Among the instruments more or less restricted to religious service are whistles and small hand bells, which are used for invoking and saluting the loa and the dead. *Canaries* (large clay water vessels) also enter into ritual use. They are sung into, tapped with sticks, and on some occasions are covered with goatskin heads and played like a drum. 534 796

[a] [Fig 80 appears on p. 112-55. -- Analyst]

[9] [Informant: Sobihas Tore, Bamako. Cf. p. 354, [115] category 116. -- Analyst]

[10] [See Courlander, op. cit., p. 239. Cf. p. 354, Cat. 116. -- Analyst]

CHAPTER 5: *Services for the Loa and the Family Ancestors (pp. 42-74)*

[1] Note that the houngan and the laplace are performing services normally performed by the *prêt' savane*. 600

[2] Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 165.

[3] Parsons, *Spirit Cult in Hayti*.

[4] Account given by Jean Ravel Pierre.

[5] Informant: Albert Kofi Prempeh, Ghana.

[6] Account given by Volenka Saintvil. A. W. Cardinall notes in his book *Tales Told in Togoland* (p. 69): "Trees are in most cases treated with respect. Before a man dare fell one for a canoe he must and invariably does sacrifice to its spirit and apologizes for the harm he is about to do it." [illegible] 171

[7] The rite of *rafraîchi tête* is conducted periodically for a *mait' tête* after the original *lavé tête* ceremony. The purpose is to "refresh" the loa and make him content with his residence in the head of the devotee. [illegible] 776

[8] Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, p. 233.

[9] It is of interest to note the perseverance of traditional attitudes toward water rites in certain Negro cults in the United States. River baptism often is attended by ecstatic seizures in familiar form.

[10] Odette Mennesson Rigaud, "Notes on Two Marriages with Voodoun Loa," in Appendix A of Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, p. 264.

CHAPTER 6: *Songs of the Peristyle (pp. 75-94)*

[1] This theme is further commented on in chap. 13. Compare with the following excerpt from a Surinam song reported by Herskovits in *Suriname Folk-Lore* (p. 689): 171 533

I have no mother there, 534
I have no father there, 794
I have no sister there,
I haven't got anybody there. 776

CHAPTER 7: *In the Mapou Tree: Magic, Demons, and Compacts*
(pp. 95-104)

600

[1] Simpson, "Haitian Magic," *Social Forces*, October, 1940, p. 97.

[2] Note the coincidence of the term *gris-gris* or *grigri* as used in the United States, where it has the same meaning as mojo, or "voodoo" charm. [776] [789]

[3] Simpson, "Haitian Peasant Economy," *Journal of Negro History*, October, 1940, p. 503. [171]

[4] Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, p. 243.

CHAPTER 8: *Mardi Gras and Rara: Jugglers, Maypoles, and Kings*
(pp. 105-109)

[1] Aubin, *En Haïti*, p. 42.

[2] Marionettes of this kind have been observed in both East and West Africa and are well known in the region of Senegal. I saw a phallic marionette, virtually identical with the Haitian version, in the neighborhood of Khartoum, Sudan. [171] [541] [536]

CHAPTER 9: *Land and Work (pp. 110-121)*

[1] Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti*, p. 362. 583

[2] Herskovits, *Dahomey*, I, 300 ff., describes Dahomean polygamous marriage in its various forms. Although Dahomean plural marriage is complex in terms of gifts, obligations, and 171 595 423 178

3: Leyburn 2-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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> The men seldom or never go to mass, except on the days particularly set 175
> apart by the government as public fêtes. On these occasions the president 114
> and all the officers of Hayti go in procession, but the idea of devotion, I 771
> believe, never enters their contemplation. Such days are merely set aside 796
> for celebrating some particular event, which it is wished should be handed
> down to posterity. These occasions present only the external symbol of 184
> religion, the whole people being either ignorant or careless of its real character. Their manner and appearance during the celebration of the mass shew that they have no inward feelings of piety or devotion.[13]

Catholicism in Haiti, then, had fallen on evil days; Protestantism, 175
on the other hand, was unable to gain any foothold. Boyer, indiffer- 795
ent to all religion, did not even care to tolerate Wesleyan mission- 797
aries as Pétion had done, for when certain of them arrived and were
met with "persecution and stoning by a mob," it required persuasion
to gain his assent to freeing those the police had taken into custody.
He forbade any further meetings of Wesleyans, on the ground that
they stirred up riots. At the close of Boyer's administration it was [162]
estimated that there were only about 1,200 Protestants in the country, mostly Methodists and Baptists, and these primarily Negroes who had come from the United States to settle in the republic.

Although the Haitian government probably derived a certain 175
satisfaction from controlling a state Church, Boyer was impelled 795
both by circumstance and his own temperament to obtain the ap-
proval of the Holy See. His own tepid spiritual zeal had nothing to 648
do with the case; Haitian public order would benefit by a superior 659
group of priests, and Haitian prestige would rise, he thought, with 643
recognition by Rome. Having already in 1826 settled the conflict between France and Haiti in the political sphere, Boyer tried assiduously to end the schism from Rome. His propositions were examined with benevolence by the Pope, who conferred upon the primate of the Indies, archbishop of Santo Domingo, the title of archbishop of Haiti. This personage, however, was a Spaniard already established in the comfortable city of Santo Domingo amidst people of his own nationality. He could not be persuaded to move to Port-au-Prince. The failure of Boyer's efforts is due more to this ecclesiastic than to uncoöperativeness on the part of Rome. From 1834 to 1860 the Court of Rome had official representatives in Haiti, but they cannot have been very effective men, for conditions in

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[13] James Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti*, pp. 394–395.

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Any casual attempt to assess the importance of religion in the daily
lives of the people is sure to prove erroneous, for in no phase of life 771
are outward appearances so deceptive. What the unsophisticated 184
peasant believes can be ascertained on the whole more accurately
than the beliefs of the intelligent élite. To the foreign observer,
Roman Catholicism seems to play as large and as small a part in the
thinking of the Haitian upper classes as among members of upper-class
French society. Outwardly, the élite are professing Catholics
or not religious at all. It is considered proper to attend Mass and [554]
otherwise to pay respect to religious forms; actually one loses nothing [558]
in prestige if he is not a practicing Christian. Society seems to
exert no pressure in the matter. Only if a member of the upper class
fears for the security of his social position, or knows that rumors are
afloat of his addiction to Vodun, does he feel impelled to become
assiduous in his open attentions to the Church.

The national sensitiveness to skin color is apparent in the priestly 793
complexions. Since the old tradition lingers that "baptism by a black 829
will not stick," not even the peasants welcome native Catholic 563
priests. The God and saints of Christianity need the intercession of
white men, just as the Vodun spirits need that of natives. In the early
days peasants stoned Negro priests who tried to administer the
Catholic sacraments. Such an attitude toward a black clergy falls in
well with the preferences of the élite. If there were Haitian priests,
they would probably be drawn from the élite class since this is the
educated group; but it might happen that some devout peasant
would rise to the priesthood and so have the care of a parish including
élite—a contingency unthinkable to the aristocrat. Snobbishness, 796
indeed, affects the usefulness of the town priests, for the élite members 191
of the congregation insist on having sermons in French, a
language which only the small minority understand, rather than in
the Créole which is the speech of everyone, intelligible to gentry and
humble alike. The Mass is consequently celebrated for the people at
large in unknown tongues, Latin for the ritual, French for the sermon;
the benefit they derive from it must be wholly from their
inner communion stimulated by the actions of the service. The town 793
priests are often willing enough to accede to élite pressure in the matter 191
of language, for they know French as their mother tongue and 796
would have to learn Créole; although some of the more devoted
priests become adept in native speech, using it in their personal

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793 ministry and in sermons in country chapels.[17] For the élite, well
191 groomed, sitting with his missal in a seat bearing his name plate, the
● 796 psychic elation to be derived from hearing a sermon preached in a
language which the rabble seated around him does not know must
[629] be very great—and very Christian.

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793 [17] I have heard a sermon in the chapel at fashionable Kenscoff preached in Créole,
with the President of the republic, himself a master—and a politically astute user—of
191 Créole in the congregation. Likewise, I have met priests who, although they have
lived in the country for a generation, have never learned the tongue used by ninety-five out of a hundred of their parishioners all the time, and by a hundred per cent of them some of the time.

175
567 along that river, Dahomey was the name of a powerful kingdom
under a political administration which embraced a fair amount of
interchange of ideas and similarity of social institutions, including
religion.

175 Discretion made the planters separate slaves who knew each other,
567 in order to minimize opportunities for revolt among them. This
178 policy, although it prevented the rapid growth of "slave" customs,
at the same time dispersed Dahomeans all over the colony; beliefs
and practices held in common among the slaves were likely to take
on a Dahomean cast. Since their work was directed, their freedom of
movement limited, and their family life broken up, there was practically
no opportunity for the outcropping of *any* African ideas
relating to economic life, government, property, education, or
175 marriage. The one sphere in which it was possible for Old World
178 beliefs to continue was the religious. No slave dealer could penetrate
● 796 the minds of his workers or silence their folk tales and folk songs in
771 the evening when work was done; even the strictest plantation
535 owners allowed dances in the slave quarters on Saturday nights and
Sunday. It is the dance, a vital part of Dahomean religion, which
seems to have formed the nucleus around which the diverse beliefs
of African tribesmen grouped themselves, for it was a form of action
which need not involve anything more than amusement or emotional
release, if the participant were not religiously inclined. In the
beginning, as Goethe observes, was the Act. To this simple Act of
dancing, the Word, with thought behind it, could easily be added
later. Practically all African tribesmen danced; and the numerous
Dahomeans had a dance which was ostensibly for diversion but could
be turned to a religious purpose as well.

771 Here, then, was the skeleton of a slave religion. Although every
171 single African tribe had its own beliefs and ritual, each (so far as we
174 know) had common elements with every other one. For example, all
slaves, whether Senegalese or Angolese, believed in a multiplicity of
spiritual beings, some of whom controlled the aspects of nature—lightning
and storms, the sea, the sky. They thought that disease and
other ill fortune came from spirits who must be placated in order to
win back health and well-being. All felt that the normal course of
events could be altered by magical spells, formulae, or charms; that
one could bring misfortune to an enemy, luck to oneself, or ward
off otherwise inevitable fate. Most of them had been accustomed to

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learn the properties of plants, both for healing and for poison. Except 771
for the belief in spiritual beings, this folk knowledge would hardly 171
have been classed as religious, for it was useful in every phase of daily 174
life; the classification is that of he anthropologist, not of the simple black.

If Dahomean beliefs prevaile over others of African origin, it was chiefly because of the numerical preponderance of Dahomeans in the
colony, together with the pop larity of their religious dances. The [776]
Dahomean spirits or gods we e Vodun; the dance in which the [796]
worshiper sought the inspiratio of the spirits was a Vodun dance. [535]
Like all but the highly organiz d religions, this one recognized the validity of other beliefs. Its ractitioners were not bigots. No hierarchy existed to keep out ew accretions. Imperceptibly these were added to the original basi form: here an Arada spirit, there a Congolese prayer, and in many instances a Catholic saint, until the composite Vodun religion bega to take shape.

There is no evidence that du ing colonial times Vodun was ever 174
considered important by the white ruling class—certainly not as a 535
faith. To most planters the word was the name for a vigorous dance. 796
Judging from Moreau de Saint-Méry's description it was held openly [192]
enough, at times being witnessed by the whites as a sort of nocturnal [114]
diversion. Moreau knew, as id other whites, that there were "superstitious beliefs" connecte with it, yet the offhand use of the word "supe.stition" was indicat on enough that the beliefs were not
regarded as important. We have seen, however, what profitable use 175
the slaves were able to make of the apparent innocence of their 669
dances. When the idea of revol began to germinate among them, 567
gathering on each plantation at least once a week they had ample 202
opportunity to hatch their plans. It is known that the campaign for 793
revolt was developed partly under the stimulus of the Negro 771
Boukman, a *houngan* or priest of Vodun. By means of drumbeats, which to the whites merely pounded out the rhythm for dancing but had for centuries been a means of communication at long distance in parts of West Africa, that ripening plot was telegraphed from one plantation to another. Even more important, perhaps, was the unity of feeling made possible, despite all incoherence of tradition and language, by the Vodun background. 114

The revolt of half a million slaves was a success. This fact has been 175
rather too calmly accepted by historians of Saint-Domingue, who 669
666

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Vodun, then, was both widespread and powerful enough to be 175
turned to most effective ends in 1791. Contemporary accounts of it 771
still saw it as a meeting ground of superstitions. The French naturalist, 114
Descourtilz, for example, was primarily struck by the use of the [77]
occult in connection with Vodun; he especially describes a woman [784]
who, under the seizure of her god, took a live coal in her hand without being burnt; a husband who by the use of magic struck his inconstant wife with a languorous malady, effective for half a year; and the knowledge of poison which was combined with the practice of magic. He mentions but one of the Vodun gods by name but implies the existence of many others.[10]

Madiou, Haiti's first historian, likewise always spoke of Vodun as 114
a savage survival; he says of a native general, "Lamour Dérance, 771
plunged in gross errors, put his faith in *sorcery*, in the prophecy of 781
papas, or priests of *African fetishism*."[11] In his scornful distaste for the vulgar he clearly indicated by his own italics some conspicuous elements of the developing religion: magic, the use of fetishes, and a Vodun priesthood. His illustration of Dérance's error was his making soldiers believe that bullets could not wound them:

> When he marched to combat he was preceded by bands of Congos, Aradas, Ibos, Nabos, Mandingues, Haoussas, who threw themselves against the French battalions with a prodigious intrepidity, crying that the bullets were but dust. But this courage which *superstition* fed was shattered against the ramparts of . . . the Europeans' square formations.

It is noteworthy that the first three black rulers set themselves 175
against Vodun because of its potentialities for sedition. The plots to 643
overthrow the old régime had come to fruition at apparently inno- 796
cent Vodun dances. Although the ingenuous aspect of the dance 671
gathering had deceived the white masters, Toussaint, Dessalines, and 659
Christophe knew the meaning of the assemblies. All three had to 669
drive their people hard and knew that resentment would be an 794
inevitable consequence; it must not have an opportunity to burgeon 798
at nightly gatherings. Toussaint was the strictest of the three, for he
forbade all dances and nocturnal assemblage.[12] The other two singled ~~[illegible]~~

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10. M. E. Descourtilz, *Voyages d'un naturaliste en Haïti, 1799–1803* (Paris, 1935 ed.), pp. 116–118.
11. Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, III, p. 33.
12. In an order of January 4, 1800.

The other two singled

175 out Vodun dances for their bans, permitting the purely social dances.
648 On the eve of the first anniversary of independence, "as soon as
794 retreat was sounded, African dances of all kinds began in the tents
and open fields; the Vaudoux dance alone was proscribed; the noise
● 796 of the drums did not quiet down until morning."[13] Dessalines was
671 more suspicious of Vodun than the other two for, being a supersti-
659 tious man himself, he feared that some of his growing number of
798 enemies might use sorcery upon him; consequently whenever his
771 active police reported meetings of Vodun worshipers he had the
offenders shot if they could be caught. Practically all Haitians knew how to distinguish the rhythms of Vodun drumbeats from those of other dances, so that it was not particularly difficult to track down the meeting places. What Christophe really believed, no one could say. He paid outward homage to Roman Catholicism, of course, but rumor persisted of his great faith in magic and the power of African fetishes.[14]

The élite mulatto presidents, Pétion and Boyer, did not deign to
175 dignify Vodum by prohibiting it. No revelation of their attitude
643 toward it survives, but we may note that no law of their thirty-six-
794 year tenure of the presidency mentions it. From their other opinions
659 one concludes that they regarded it as merely another of the people's
798 innocent and harmless aberrations. Not one of the foreigners whose
curiosity about the Negro republic led them to report on Haitian
796 life of this period gives an intelligent account of Vodun as it then
771 was. Macaulay, writing in 1831, for example, describes the annual
114 celebration at the source of Grande Rivière de l'Artibonite; he men-
tions the festive dances (not Vodun) and singing, then says: "Morning ceremonies consisted of a solemn sacrifice at which the blood of victims immolated for the feast were offered, and libations of wine were poured on the spring."[15] This was clearly a Vodun sacrifice. Brown, in 1837, writes as a religious man:

> No race is, more than the African, given to religious feelings, though these being but mere sensations entirely independent of thought and reason, manifest themselves in a display of idle fooleries, or dark and hideous terrors of the imagination. They intermix the legitimate ritual of the Catholic faith with the mysterious adoration paid to their national Fetishes, and the

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[13] Madiou, *op. cit.*, III, 186.
[14] See Charles Mackenzie, *Notes on Hayti*, pp. 90–91.
[15] Zachary Macaulay, *Haïti* (Paris, 1835), pp. 90–91.

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African obi and the Catholic priest both come in for a share of their respect and homage.[16]

This is the usual tone of the comment on native religion, as when Candler in 1842 speaks of funerals in country places "with the *rites of heathenism*, such as are practised to this day in the heart of Africa."[17] Of these conventional criticisms of Vodun, one of the more thoughtful is Bonneau's:

> The shocking phantasmagorias of fetishism paralyzed the intellectual development of the African race for six thousand years; superstition is in some sort inherent in its nature. The [Haitian] people need to break with their past. Catholicism has been prodigiously patient and courageous, but it does not possess the necessary corrective for extirpating the fetishism which immobilizes the black population. The Catholic Church, by fractioning the religious sentiment, by forcing thought to diffuse itself in order to take in a thousand secondary details, by imposing on the people practices without number which tend to materialize the cult, by placing as intermediaries between God and men a multitude of saints and genies, encourages and fortifies the tendencies, even the most deplorable ones, of the black race, whose intellect has been shrouded in mist for centuries precisely because it can grasp only with difficulty the relationships between things and ideas, tending rather to lose itself in details than to rise to general and synthetic conceptions.[18]

If the fixing of periods has any clarifying value, one might set the stages of the development of Vodun as follows: 175 771

1730–1790, its Emergence, when the importation of slaves was steadily increasing, with a gradual ascendancy of Dahomean ideas; 794

1790–1800, its practical Testing in the fires of revolt when, out of apparent innocence and enforced secrecy, Vodun effectively united the slaves in their action for freedom;

1800–1815, its Suppression under the black rulers;

1815–1850, its quiet Diffusion to all the people and assumption of the form it now exhibits.

The middle of the nineteenth century was the turning point. Before then it had been so to speak in gestation; under Soulouque, then ruling, it publicly emerged. Until the mid-century élite people had

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16. Dr. J. Brown, *The History and Present Condition of St. Domingo*, II, 273.
17. John Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti*, p. 166.
18. A. Bonneau, *Haiti: ses progrès—son avenir*, pp. 24–25.

for Vodun theology, nor any established order for the service, 771
variety is one of its chief characteristics. Impossible as it is to cite a definitive list of Vodun beliefs, those most generally held might be combined into a Creed, which would run about as follows:

> I believe in scores of gods and spirits, guardians of earth and sky, and of all things visible and invisible;
>
> I believe that all these vodun (who are called "loa" or "mystères") are potent, although less majestic than *le bon Dieu* of the Christians; that some of them came with our ancestors from our former home in Africa, while others we have learned about in our Haitian fatherland; that these loa have power to possess us, their worshipers, informing us by inspiration of their needs and desires, which we must faithfully satisfy; that these loa, like us, are capable of good and evil, gentleness and anger, mercy and revenge;
>
> I believe in the efficacy of sacrifice; in the pleasures of living; in respect due to twins; in the careful cult of the dead, who may return to our abodes; in the spiritual causation of diseases and misfortune; in the dance through which we may be "mounted" by our loa; in the possibility of interfering with the normal flow of events by means of magic; in the efficacy of charms and spells; and in the Holy Catholic Church.

Those who conceive of religion in terms of a rigid orthodoxy, 771
monotheism, sin, a moral law, eternal rewards or punishments, will 177
not understand Haitian Vodun. It is as hospitable to new spiritual 776
conceptions as any faith could be, requiring only that the additions
be applicable to life as it is lived in the Haitian hills and valleys, and
that they adapt their shape and terminology to the native penchant.
Monotheism is rarely the practical belief of simple people, but rather
of prophets and scholars. It is easy enough to believe in an all-powerful god but much more difficult to arrive at a conception of a
unique God. In Dahomey the people had reached some such stage of
belief in omnipotence but not of uniqueness. When later, in slavery,
transplanted Africans heard the Catholic doctrine of a god who ruled
creation by the fiat of his conquering will, they assimilated the idea
with a significant change: the Christian God became the Great
Master of the other gods. The slaves very simply placed Him at the
head of their pantheon. Even today, the first words of a Vodun [796]
service are the request for permission from the Great Master to go on 114
with the service. As Dorsainvil says: 178

> This term chosen to designate the supreme God was imposed on them by 776
> their environment. The colonist, the master, incarnated for the slave the

787 pression, but in the case of religion the nature of our worship interposes barriers between us and the manifestation of feeling. Almost every denomination which has risen to prominence, no matter how anti-ritualistic in its beginnings, has grown more formally proper as it moved from simple meeting-houses to churches, or as it began to draw upon the middle and upper classes for its clientele if its origin was humble. Not many Americans would care to recall the fact that their own ancestors rolled upon the ground in religious frenzy or were seized with uncontrollable fits of jerking and shouting when "the spirit of the Lord" was upon them; yet such emotional displays were a regular feature of camp meeting revival services in the Ohio Valley frontier region and elsewhere.

787 796 In order even vaguely to apprehend Vodun possession, one must disburden one's mind of all notions of formalism, for although the priest as officiant has his place in the service, there is direct participation of the people in every Vodun service and dance. The religion is theirs, not the priests'. One must forego the idea of self-restraint, adopting rather the view that the chief end of worship is to establish direct communication with the gods. One must forget the belief that to lose consciousness, roll one's eyes, scream, and speak in a strange voice are signs of mental derangement, and regard all these abnormalities as very desirable achievements in religious life, symptoms to be contemplated with satisfaction by friends and family. A person possessed has no retrospective feeling of shame. Quite the contrary: he has won through to new peace and security, for a god has spoken through his mouth, revealing divine will.

787 Vodun possession is therefore something more than the elation of the Holy Roller, and less than the mystical exaltation of the enraptured saints, yet partaking of elements of both. The descending afflatus is more discriminate than in a Holy Roller service, for rarely is more than one out of five worshipers seized by the god; inversely, it is more general than the ecstasy of a saint, whose experience is partly notable because it is rare. Actually, there is in civilized experience no precise parallel to Vodun possession, which runs the gamut of emotions from gay fun to mordant depression. To emphasize the uniqueness of the Haitian variety of possession, it must be noted that it occurs according to definitely understood rules and clearly defined circumstances. If a worshiper in his enthusiasm should let himself be seized "out of turn," so to speak, he would be instantly called to order.

787 proper control, as they should be. If an unwanted god persists in
114 mounting an individual, the pertinacious one is commanded to go
away or the victim himself is sent home until he can recover his own personality. Many people strongly resist possession when it is imminent. Judged by our own standards, possession of the Vodun variety could certainly not be called normal; judged by Haitian standards, however, it would be absurd to call abnormal an experience known and approved by the majority of the community.[29]

● 776 Possession occurs either at the service or at the dance. Here again
535 the white man has nothing in his religious experience to enable him
787 to comprehend the pattern of Haitian religion. The service corresponds nearly enough to the Catholic Mass or to more realistic sacrifices in ancient Jewish rites, but neither of these faiths nor any other the white man knows well has dancing for religion's sake. In Vodun, however, the dance is of equal importance with the service.

778 In the tiny *houmfort* (also spelled *houmfor*) of the priest, which is
346 little more than a hut with earthen floor, the service begins. To call
786 this structure a temple is at once to make it too imposing and to confuse the white man in his attempt to understand the scene; it is no more of a temple than was a tiny primitive early Christian church. Most houmforts in Haiti would be crowded if twenty people were present. At one end is an altar, more or less resembling the high altar in a Catholic chapel; on it are placed a crucifix, flowers, candles, fruit and food, wine, lithographs of Catholic saints, and whatever other objects, Catholic or Vodun, local practice may dictate and individual taste prefer. Upon the floor are traced formal cabalistic patterns, generally in corn meal, both to fend off evil influences and as required by the particular loa. The officiants may be male or female or both. To the service ordinarily come only the members of the family and their specifically invited guests; neighbors and friends will attend the subsequent dance.

796 A student of Catholicism would find in the first part of the service
788 a great deal of ritual borrowed from the Church. The blessing,
177 genuflections, making the sign of the cross, responses, and the like,
782 all clearly show a Catholic background which accords well with
787 certain objects upon the altar. Imperceptibly the strictly Vodun
element obtrudes itself. The loa are asked whether they will accept

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29. The statement of the two sides of this controversy may be found in Dorsainvil, *op. cit.*, throughout; and in Herskovits, *op. cit.*, particularly pp. 146–147.

the sacrifices; food is set before the sacrificial animal, and if this food 796
is eaten by the creature or creatures, it is known that the loa is satisfied. 782
Then comes the actual sacrifice of the animal, a slaying neither 787
ostentatious nor dramatic, since often it does not occur in the hounfort 788
itself. It is at this juncture that possession is looked for. The loa, 177
by seizing one or more of his devotees—or, if possession fails, by the divination of the priest—makes known his desires. The demands of the loa are likely to be modest: a candle, a special article of food, certain specific attentions. Occasionally he insists upon an impressive sacrifice. Whatever his desires, they must be gratified or else the loa will mildly harass the family; long refusal will produce anger and full vengeance. If the god is Rada, his sacrifice will be white, red, or vari-colored; if he is Pétro, he will wish black or gray animals—chickens, turkeys, goats, bullocks.

The service itself, then, is entirely religious in nature, consisting wholly of ceremonies and rituals conducted by officiating priests, with the purpose of restraining or pacifying gods who may have been pursuing a family with misfortune, or gratifying those who
have made it happy. The dance following the service apparently 796
expresses the joy of the family at dangers averted and gratitude for 535
blessings bestowed. [782]

In contrast to the private character of the service, the dance has all the appearance of a social event. Invitations to it are sent all over the countryside. People attend for good fellowship, gossip, and the sheer delight of dancing, but in the background one is always aware of a
religious element as well. The dance is held in a specially constructed [346]
tonnelle, a roof of boughs and leaves supported by uprights. Drums [534]
are not always used at the earlier service, but no dance could be held without them. The crowd drifts in slowly, so that the dance may be long in getting under way. The best drummers in the community may not arrive until after two or three hours. Three drums of different sizes, all properly baptized, set the rhythms, and sometimes
gourd rattles embroider a commentary upon the beat. Whereas at 796
the service possession comes as a result of the priest's invocations, at 535
the dance it is inspired by the drumming. Each loa has his own 787
particular rhythm, so that as soon as it is determined what god has seized upon a dancer the drummers take up the rhythm of that god. The officiant immediately rushes to the mounted person with a calabash of water and a candle; by following the "horse" around and

796 steadying his attention, he practically hypnotizes him back into full
535 consciousness. As soon as the possessed is normal again, water out of
787 the calabash is poured at the central post and a sign of the cross is
made with the candle before it.

796 Contrary to the expectation of thrill-seeking white visitors, the
535 Vodun dance does not merit the name of an orgy. True, the dancers
786 wear their old clothes, for they are going to have violent exercise;
true also, those who are possessed give the impression of losing some
of their inhibitions. But the dancers do not embrace each other as at
a white man's dance; the drinking which occurs is hardly ever excessive; and the climax of a successful dance is a religious experience.
[831] The Haitian is no more obsessed by sex than is the American; indeed,
living simply and without many of the artificial restraints of "civilization," he is probably less so. What white visitors sometimes see, under the impression that they are witnessing a Vodun dance, is nothing more than a secular Saturday night social dance. It, too, has drum rhythms instead of an orchestra, musical instruments being rare in Haiti; but the dance has no more religious (or "Voodoo") significance than a barn dance in the United States.

771 Creed and practice go hand in hand in Haiti. The Vodun wor-
776 shiper believes in the loa of his faith and does the things necessary to
get in touch with them. These conceptions are the major part of his creed, as the corresponding actions form the bulk of his religious activity.

171 A few articles of the creed remain. "I believe in respect to twins
. . ." Hundreds of so-called primitive peoples see in twins some special
845 significance, now fortunate, now tragic. Many of the tribes along the
787 Atlantic coast of Africa thought of twins as an omen, so that the
presence of ritual regard for them in Haiti is hardly surprising. It is probably incorrect to speak of the worship, or the cult, of twins, for they are not deified, nor is there a common ritual for them: thousands of persons pay them no homage whatever. One family has a high regard for twins because it has numbered them among its ancestors or recent relatives; another family pays respect to all twins because a priest has advised seeking the good luck which comes from
[782] *marassa* (twins). There seems to be some confusion of thought about
this aspect of religion: twins are not gods, but merely omens from the gods; yet sacrifices are made to them. Christmas and harvest are the usual seasons for the offering. Food is prepared in the morning

4. *Magic*

771 It is difficult enough to make a distinction between religion and superstition; it is practically impossible, in dealing with a people who in their closeness to nature are not accustomed to the refinements of "civilized" thinking, to make one between magic and certain aspects of religion. Underlying both is belief in the supernatural; characteristic of both is a faith which recognizes a higher order of cause and effect operating with the lower one familiar in commonplace matters. Anthropologists hold various theories about magic, some saying that it is the set of practices out of which religion evolved, others that it exists for personal and practical ends and has little to do with religion; still others that it is a development out of religion, paralleling and complementing it.[35]

771 One element which distinguishes religious practice from magic is
the attitude toward spirits. In religion, the worshiper pays homage
789 and humbly petitions, preserving meanwhile an attitude of humility
782 to spirits or gods who must be propitiated; in magic, the human
being, by coërcive words and actions, commands the services of spirits who (if the magical rites have been properly performed) must obey. The distinction is not between good and evil, for a god may have both characteristics and be entirely capable of working harm to mortals. As already noted, in the Haitian system the gods are like men in being mixtures of both principles.

771 Another difference between religion and magic concerns time.
789 Religion is social, open to all worshipers or at least to all of a group
or social rank. Its rites are continually and repeatedly performed.
796 Magic, on the contrary, though sometimes public and social, is
generally private and, since it is for a specific purpose, is performed only when the need arises. A man who was thoroughly conversant with magic might go through his whole life without ever feeling the need of employing it or having to exert himself to fend it off. One turns to magic as a sophisticated man might turn to medicine. Either may be done without; both may be used to excess.

787 In Haitian Vodun, magic interweaves itself with the general faith.

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791 [35] See, for example, Ruth Benedict, "Magic," in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*,
793 X, 39–44; A. Goldenweiser, *Early Civilization* (New York, 1922), chaps. X–XI; J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London, 1907–15), *passim*; R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion* (New York, 1914), *passim*; and Sumner and Keller, *op. cit.*, II, chaps. XXIX–XXXI.

565 ing since 1860 has had its effect upon the children of the upper classes.
771 Two hundred churchmen working with a population of more than two million cannot distribute their benefits equally. Teachers must devote themselves to those whose minds are educable, who have access to schools, and who can afford time for daily classes. An element of social snobbishness entered as well. Catholicism was socially accepted in the Western World whose approval the élite coveted, where Vodun if known at all was regarded as a mere superstition. To prove his separation from the peasant black, the élite person was therefore Catholic or nothing.

[797] It would have required many times two hundred teaching brothers and sisters, all with the zeal of fanatics and the energy of dynamos, to convert the masses away from Vodun. In acquainting the peasants with Church forms and certain beliefs the priests have been entirely successful; in making exclusive Catholics of them they have had no success at all.

771 Every vital social institution is continually in a process of change.
177 Vodun, a very living faith, has steadily borrowed more and more from Catholicism, the only other religion with which the people come in close contact. When one can go from a Saturday night Vodun sacrifice and dance to a Sunday morning Catholic Mass with no feeling of incongruity, it is obvious that the minds of the worshipers are actively predisposed to assimilation of creed and ritual.

796 We have suggested in a previous chapter some traces of the Catholic Mass in Vodun ceremony. The Vodun service regularly begins with a long ritual which the observer who knows both the Créole language and the Catholic liturgy recognizes as being almost entirely Roman. While the Vodun houngan sits quietly by, a special officiant known as the *prêt' savanne* (bush priest) reads or pretends to read from the Catholic prayer book. For the Pater Noster, the creed, the Ave Maria, the Salve Regina, and the prayers, the worshipers kneel or stand as they would in church. Candles burn, water is sprinkled, the sign of the cross is made, the chants are sung. When the benediction completes this part of the service, the houngan takes over to conduct the purely African rites; yet his first words are, "*Grâce misecorde*," and many Catholic interpolations appear even in this second part of the service.

[778] The Vodun ritual is conducted before an altar, in Haitian Créole
[192] called a "trône," which is a perfect marriage between Vodun and

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Catholicism. I have seen such an altar, with its adjacent table, bearing 796
a crucifix, candles, (holy) water, lithographs of the "Assumption of [778]
the Virgin," "St. George and the Dragon," the "Adoration of the [192]
Kings," and certain unrecognized but distinctly European saints; in addition to these objects, however, were such unecclesiastical articles as bananas, rice, beans, squash, various bottles of drinks, and plates of food. Near by were the sacrificial animals.

Vodun makes use frequently of one sacrament of the Church— [177]
baptism. Needless to say, this rite is not a monopoly of Christianity, and its use in the folk religion may very well have come from Africa. Constant witnessing of the rite in church must nevertheless have influenced its adoption for all important Vodun ceremonials. The drums used in the dance are baptized; so also is the first loa to possess a devotee; at many other special times the rite is likewise performed, generally with a set of prayers which invoke Catholic saints and Vodun loa alike.

Mention has already been made of the identification of Rada and 776
Pétro loa with certain saints and martyrs of the Church. Such identi- 177
fications are not uniform, but vary in different parts of the country. [184]
Legba is generally associated with Saint Anthony, but often (and to the Christian, more understandably) with Saint Peter who traditionally guards the gates of heaven; the Virgin Mary quite obviously is related, whether as Queen of Heaven, as the Sorrowing Mother, or as the innocent Virgin, with numerous manifestations of Maîtresse Erzulie; Damballa, whose symbol is the serpent, is sometimes Moses (whose brother's rod became a serpent consuming other serpents, and who by lifting up a serpent in the wilderness cured the people of their snake bites) and sometimes Saint Patrick (whose association with snakes is well known). Other identifications are numerous, showing the penchant of the people for combining what they know of both religions.[2]

Many of the loa have, like the Catholic saints, their symbols, their special days, colors, and other associations. Some like white, some red; the serpent, the rainbow, the crossroads are among the symbols; sacred days occur weekly, Tuesday being Legba's, Wednesday Ogun's, Friday Erzulie's, and Saturday Baron Samedi's. It may be

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[2] The distinguished Haitian ethnographer, sociologist, and historian, Dr. Jean Price-Mars, has made a list of some of these identifications in his *Ainsi parla l'oncle*, pp. 180–181.

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A Catholic chapel had been erected in recent years upon a hilltop

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long respected as a favorite haunt of the loa Damballa. Apparently this was no slight, for Vodun gods are not monopolistic. On the hill, however, once stood a tree in which a snake made his home, symbol of Damballa. Many years earlier a forthright Catholic priest had ordered his parishioners to fell the tree, an insult direct to the loa which none of the faithful dared give. The determined cleric therefore performed the task himself, but left a sizable stump on which has now been placed a small statue of the popular Catholic Saint Anthony.

The feast day was well attended, and while the Mass and sermon were proceeding in the crowded chapel dozens of men and women who could not get into the building, or who preferred not to try, remained outside. Many were simply standing about in groups, chatting; others were more significantly engaged. Some kneeled before the tree stump at whose foot many candles were burning; there, as at a shrine, they prayed. Were their prayers Catholic petitions to Saint Anthony or Vodun prayers to Damballa? At another corner of the church under the shade of a tree sat a venerable woman dispensing a liquid concoction, which seemed particularly popular with the women and children. Holding out their hands they received a palmful each of the syrupy substance, which they then smeared upon their bodies; on the eyes or face, on their legs, or on more private parts. The Catholic priest later explained the liquid as a "Voodoo brew," and again as a charm; more accurately, it was a garde to turn away illness from the parts of the body rubbed with it.

The officiating priest knew perfectly well that not all the candles burning at the tree stump were for Saint Anthony; he was also aware of the woman dispensing her liquid, yet took no steps to stop her. He assumed that with the small statue of Saint Anthony on the stump, there were already children growing up unaware of Damballa's connection with the place. He hoped to find money for a larger, more imposing statue so that as generations passed the memory of the loa, as related to worship on this hill, would be supplanted. As for the woman, why bother to drive her away? It would merely cause antagonism, and would certainly not stop the practice. Her being there might draw a few more peasants to the feast, where they would have an opportunity to learn the true Word.

As soon as the Mass in the chapel was finished, the people poured out and began to form a line of march. Headed by the priest the whole congregation, including many who had not penetrated to the

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798 chapel, wended their way down the hill and across to a clearing
● 796 among the trees. On the way many of the women stopped beside
177 the path to pluck a handful of long grass or reached up to break twigs from the smaller trees. At the clearing, primitively decorated with colored cloth, the priest made a short discourse; then he intoned three times, "Notre Dame d'Alta Gracia," and the worshipers, raising their wisps of greenery above their heads, rustled the twigs until the air was filled with a sound like the hissing of many serpents. "*Priez pour nous!*" they responded each time to the rustling accompaniment. The Virgin of Alta Gracia is the miraculous saint of Higuey, as much renowned among Haitians as among the Spanish-speaking Dominicans farther east. The supplication to the Virgin is proper enough to a Catholic feast, but the hissing, reminiscent of Damballa, is an intimation that the Vodun loa is not yet forgotten on his holy hill.

This festival of Notre Dame d'Alta Gracia shows not only the adaptability of Catholicism to Vodun, but likewise that of Vodun to Catholicism. Not even with the will to preserve their faith and practice pure can most men resist the infiltration of surrounding beliefs; in Haiti, the will to resist is itself lacking. This the Church knows, and counts upon for ultimate victory. In other words, there is to be not precisely a conversion of worshipers away from Vodun, but a slow transformation of Vodun itself into a true Catholic faith within the hearts of the people.

In its long experience in adaptability, the Church has in many a country learned to establish a ground of common understanding with lowly folk, while keeping its touch with aristocrats. Following the principle that where a belief or rite is apparently ineradicable it is advisable to turn it to Catholic uses, the Church in Haiti has often made this kind of adjustment, just as in earlier times with the Aztecs, Mayans, and other continental American Indians. An example of it may be observed at Saut d'Eau, near Ville-Bonheur.

787 Here, near the centre of Haiti, in 1884 there appeared in a palm
778 tree the vision of a beautiful Virgin blessing the people. She re-
798 mained so long that according to tradition the whole countryside saw her. The parish priest, unwilling to permit this obsession of the people to continue, came to drive away the apparition. The Virgin departed, apparently of her own will. People saw her no more, but many came to the palm tree and were miraculously cured and

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marvelously aided in distress. The priest, not willing to allow even 787
this "delusion," tried to cut down the tree but was wounded by his 778
own machete. Eventually, however, the tree was destroyed by 798
natural causes, and a church erected on the site. Fire destroyed the church. Each successive church building has likewise been destroyed, by fire or by lightning. No longer now does the Catholic Church combat the sanctity of Saut d'Eau: after all, it was the Virgin who appeared, not a loa. The great celebrations on every fifteenth of [796]
July draw pilgrims from all over Haiti. Although the Church now grudgingly approves the feast it is still recognizably Vodun in character, for devout souls who bathe in the water are "mounted" by loa. The Church has a hard battle ahead of it to win this festival for Catholicism.

Three factors work in favor of the Catholic struggle to win 771
Haitians completely away from Vodun: the world-wide organization 177
of the Church, which can always throw trained reserves into the battle; the superior intellectual equipment of the priests, enabling 798
them to plan their campaign and use psychological weapons; and [795]
the plasticity of Vodun itself, which is a conglomeration of human feelings, ideas, and traditions rather than a rigid sect with an inflexible ritual.[3] Even with these advantages, it is still the battle of a few dozen men on one side with the Haitian masses (more than two million) on the other. So far as one is ever justified in prophecy, it seems safe to assume that Vodun will continue to assimilate more and more fragments of Catholicism; that its appeal will remain so long as education and medicine are not extended to the whole countryside; that eventually—it may be centuries hence—Vodun rites may sink back into the status of living folklore, to which the simple turn in their deepest need.

One of the strongest missionary advantages of the Roman Catholic [795]
Church has been the breadth given it by two thousand years of [797]
experience. In so long a life it has had to be all things to all men; out of necessity it has developed around the central core so wide a variety of belief, doctrine, form, and traditional practice, that there is something for every believer, whether scholarly or untutored, powerfully important or humbly obscure. What the cultivated ~~786~~

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[3] The absence of any written formulation of Vodun must certainly be a factor in its friability. Recorded tradition and written history tend to create definiteness of pattern. [771]

Similarly in Haitian towns, where the élite speak French

197 and where French is taught in the schools, the Créole is less "pure"
191 than in the untutored countryside. Even there the language is changing,
193 for there is steadily operating that "law of simplification" which reduces the complications of language when it has only an oral tradition.[12] Abridgment occurs more and more frequently, agglutination is more apparent, and words tend toward the monosyllabic.

191 Everyone in Haiti speaks and understands Créole. Nursemaids
197 teach it to their élite charges, so that children know it from infancy; élite lovers lapse into its expressive phrases in order to say something particularly intimate which might sound sentimental in French; priests must use it in their parish work if they are to be understood at all. Even the élite presidents have found it wise to speak often to the countrypeople in their own tongue. The gendarmes would be helpless in their police work without it, as would the agricultural, health, and other governmental services. It is the language in which all the small business of Haiti is conducted.[13] Ernest Douyon has written brilliantly and revealingly about it:

> If, on the one hand, we have a business language, an official tongue, which is French, our true maternal language, on the other hand, that one which we first lisp, that of the country as a whole (I had almost said "of the true country," for such is the case), that of the city people as well as of countryfolk, that of all families whatever their differences in education, the language one hears not only in humble huts but in luxurious villas, not only in offices or among the masses but also in private apartments and salons, that which for the crudest as for the most finely cultivated minds (even when these latter through snobbery try to deny the fact) is at all times the most naturally expressive, that which perfectly translates our deepest sentiments (jubilation, anger, love, or whatever) precisely when these are most strongly felt, that which all of us, all (with the rarest exceptions) use spontaneously—is Créole! I know that it is not considered proper in polite society, that it sometimes lends a certain impression of vulgarity, that it is not the correct language for distinguished people—when they are in public! But who is the man of propriety, who the society woman, who in private does not continually use Créole?[14]

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[12] See P. Crouzet, *Les Ponts romains* (Toulouse, 1929), p. 18.

● [796] [793] [13] It must be noted that in the Vodun service the houngan sometimes speaks in *langage*, which is not Créole. It purports to be pure African, but is more likely to be mere gibberish.

[14] In his Preface to Faine, *op. cit.*, p. v.